

***What are you looking for?***

John 1:1-18

I'm looking for a good beef chili recipe.

A few years ago,

I printed on the back of a Kairos bulletin,  
a recipe, not for chili  
but for Kale soup.

Now some of you are thinking,

I'm glad I wasn't in the Kairos service  
on that Sunday!

**But** some of the folks who were there  
and heard however I managed

to connect kale soup and the scripture that day  
—well, some of those people  
went home and tried the recipe  
and were pleasantly surprised.

That's because

there is more to kale soup than *kale*;

there's chicken broth,

there's heavy cream or half and half,  
there's sauteed onion,

and there's ground sausage,  
maybe some cheese.

It's something filling and satisfying  
something good and nourishing.

So back to recipes.

There are some staples to making chili,  
wouldn't you say?

Some of you I suppose are veggie chili people.

If we were meeting in person

I'd ask you to raise your hands.

But others of you are meat in your chili,  
*chili con carne*, kind of people.

Claude Davis, he's a member here

and I'm not telling you this

because he is also my father-in-law,

but when Claude has fresh venison,  
he puts that in his chili,

and it is soooooo good.

I am a chili con carne,

a chili with meat kind of person.

I also really love, my brother-in-law, Austin's

white chicken chili recipe—

here's a spoiler:

it requires a packet of dry ranch dressing.

Really, I just love chili

and almost any variation thereof.

In fact, if you want to send me

your favorite chili recipe,

I'll try my hand at it.

So far, my attempts

at chili con carne have been,

meh.

The recipes I have aren't bad recipes

they just aren't that exciting.

We tried a chili recipe that wasn't terribly good

but have kept only because

it is in my dad's handwriting.

But I know someone out there

has a claim to fame for their chili.

So, bring on the recipes!

Chili con carne,

that's what I'm looking for.

Chili with meat

—carne,

chili with flesh.

What are you looking for?

Something good, satisfying, filling, nourishing?

This is the example

I used years ago with our senior highs

—who are now all old enough to have real jobs,

spouses, apartments, music gigs and dogs.

But to talk about  
    one of our most central  
        and important doctrines of Christian faith  
            —and I don't talk about doctrine often,  
but to unpack *incarnation*,  
    we'd talk chili con carne, chili with meat/flesh.  
        We'd eat chili on Wednesday night at Huddle  
            and talk about incarnation theology.

Truly one of the most profound statements  
    that the Christian faith makes,  
        is the affirmation of incarnation;  
        the affirmation that the gospel of John makes  
            right away in the first chapter,  
                “and the Word became flesh  
                    and lived among us.”

You see, the incarnation is paramount.

Without the proclamation of incarnation,  
    there is obviously no Christmas,  
        no Epiphany,  
        no Holy Week,  
        no Good Friday,  
        no Easter morning.

Without the incarnation there is no Christian faith.

The doctrine of incarnation  
    gives meaning to each and every aspect  
        of whom we are as followers of Jesus the Christ.

                            We believe that in the incarnation,  
                            Jesus is the fleshed-out truth about God.  
                    This means human beings  
                    can see, hear, and know God  
            in ways never before thought possible.<sup>1</sup>

Never before thought possible!

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Taylor Gench, *Encounters With Jesus; Studies in the Gospel of John* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2007) pg. 5

Isn't that an amazing way  
to approach the gospel narrative?

The story of Christ unfolds in four *gospels*;  
not historically accurate,  
verifiable, fact-driven reports.  
We receive the story of Jesus Christ in whole  
as a 4-part gospel narrative.

Each gospel; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,  
tell us the same story  
—of our God  
loving us from even before there was a beginning  
and deciding to come to us,  
as one of us,  
out of a desire for even greater love.  
***Incarnation***—the God of the cosmos  
putting on our flesh.

We are beginning a sermon series  
on the Gospel of John.

Some of us love John's proclamation story.  
Some of us are bothered  
by what seems like  
the out-of-sequence events in John's narrative.  
However, you might feel about John's gospel,  
some of our best loved  
and most well-known sayings of Jesus  
come from this gospel.

"For God so love the world, that he gave his only Son..."

"I am the good shepherd"

"I am the light of the world"

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another..."

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places..."

"I am the way, the truth and the life..."

"Blessed are those who have not seen  
and yet have come to believe."

In fact, in John,

Jesus is exceedingly verbal.

Where in Matthew, Mark and Luke

he speaks in parables,

and short sayings,

and is constantly downplaying

his messianic identity

—Jesus in John's gospel

talks constantly and openly.

I love how Frances Taylor Gench,

at Union Presbyterian Seminary puts it,

'Jesus in the gospel of John can be described as,

"Wordy is the Lamb!"<sup>2</sup>

Ha. See what she did there?

When Whit pitched this idea

of doing a sermon series on the gospel of John

I told him, *John's Jesus*

*seems so out of reach.*

And what I meant was

Jesus is different in John.

If we look at the other three gospels,

we see Jesus tired and cranky.

He will sometimes snap at the disciples.

He eats with lots of people

and falls asleep in boats.

He's so very human.

He shushes people (and spirits for that matter)

all the time

when they want to declare he is the Son of God.

But in John's gospel,

in *this* gospel,

Jesus is quite open about his divinity.

He more confident with it,

more pressing.

But I'm wrong.

This Jesus isn't out of reach.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. xi

What we will discover in John's story  
is that while this Jesus  
might seem less human and more divine at first,  
nothing could be further from the truth.

Balancing the human and the divine  
turns us back to the incarnation.

“In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God  
and the Word was God...  
<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh  
and lived among us,  
and we have seen his glory,  
the glory as of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.

Over and over in John  
we hear Jesus referred to  
as the Son of God, not the Son of man.  
Over and over in this gospel  
Jesus calls God, Father.

What John wants us to see,  
is this familial relationship, Father and Son,  
as the bond that relationally grounds Jesus  
as one who comes to us in full humanity.  
**God incarnate**, to put on flesh and pitch his tent *with us*  
—that is what *lived* and *dwelled among us* means.

John harkens back to the Israelites  
who knew God's presence  
was with them in the wilderness  
by coming to the tent of meeting.  
This is John's poetic declaration  
that Jesus as fully divine and fully human  
is now the way  
we all have access to God.

“To become flesh

is to know joy, pain, suffering and loss.  
It is to love, to grieve,  
and someday to die...and the incarnation  
binds us to God and to each other  
in a new and intimate relationship  
as God's own children.<sup>3</sup>

***What are you looking for?***

That is the question we started out with.  
We are looking for something  
we can really sink our teeth into.  
Something filling and satisfying.

***What are you looking for,***

is the question fleshed out in Jesus  
throughout John's gospel.  
In this first chapter,  
John the Baptizer proclaims  
that Jesus is the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world.

Who could do that?

Who could possibly take away the sin of the world?  
—everyone knew the answer,  
only God can do that.

And yet, John has just pointed to a man  
in a scruffy robe with sandals on his feet  
as God.

John has claimed that a man,  
a walking, talking,  
gum chewing,  
high fiving,  
fist bumping,  
fig eating  
man,

is God.

God who alone  
can take away the sin of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 5

This declaration about a man,  
who must also be God  
demands to be seen.

So, when two of John the Baptist's disciples  
hear his little sermon,  
they leave John and follow Jesus.

And when Jesus sees them following him,  
he turns and asks them,

***"what are you looking for?"***

We are looking for God in ways we ***never before thought possible.***

The incarnation,  
the act of God putting on flesh  
to be as one of us,  
with us,  
for us,

this never-seen-before incarnation,  
is fulfilled in Jesus.

<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God.

It is God the only Son,  
who is close to the Father's heart,  
who has made him known."

### ***What are you looking for?***

This question is carried all the way through,  
to the final chapters of John's gospel.

Early in the morning,  
a distraught Mary goes to the tomb  
and is greeted by someone  
she mistakes for the gardener.

"Woman," Jesus says to her,  
"why are you weeping?"

***Whom are you looking for?"***

Everyone knows who she is looking for;  
the Lamb of God  
the one who fulfills, satisfies,



the one who is good and nourishes us.

“Jesus is the fleshed-out truth about God.”<sup>4</sup>

***What are you looking for,***

Jesus asks John’s disciples.

They answer by asking him,

where are you staying—

where have you pitched your tent, Rabbi?

In the heavens?

In the temple?

In the holy city of David?

*Where are you staying,*

those disciples want to know.

And the answer Jesus gives,

is the incarnation.

Come and see.

I have pitched my tent with you.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pg. 5