

Kurigasawa Baptist Church, December 21, 2025 Christmas Service Sermon  
"God's Plan, Christmas" John 1:6-13 Pastor Kazumitsu Kimura

We have arrived at the Sunday of the Christmas service. We wish to celebrate the birth of God's only Son with all our hearts and rejoice together. The Scripture passage given for that service morning is from John 1:6 and following. The Gospel of John begins with the profoundly striking opening, "In the beginning was the Word," seeking to portray who Jesus Christ truly is. It declares that the Word existed from the very beginning of creation, that all things were made through the Word, and that in the Word was life. This "Word" can be read directly as "Christ." We can read it thus: "In the beginning was Christ. Christ was with God. Christ was God." The "Word" is called Logos in Greek. New Testament scholars explain that through this, John the Gospel writer is developing a unique Christology here, that Christ is the Logos. John seeks to convey, as a Christmas message, not through the birth narrative like Matthew or Luke, but that Christ came into the world as the true light that enlightens every person.

But what does the Christmas message conveyed by the Gospel of John mean, the very message that follows immediately in verse 14: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"? This morning, let us focus on that and listen to the Word. Most of us hear words—whether spoken or heard—as sound. Therefore, we tend to think of words as something that flows and flies about. This is precisely what the four-character idiom "rumors and gossip" (流言飛語) signifies. Yet, for the Hebrew people, "word" was more than mere sound. The word was existence itself. The total number of words in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, does not even reach 10,000 when all are gathered together. In contrast, the original language of the New Testament, Greek, has about 200,000 words. (Incidentally, Japanese is said to have about 50,000 words.) In terms of vocabulary size, Hebrew is considerably smaller than other original languages. Consequently, the Hebrew people treasured words and did not use them lightly. They valued the power inherent in words and treated the influence words exerted with great care. One scholar states, "For the Hebrews, the spoken word was terrifyingly alive." This becomes clear when reading Genesis 1. "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." God's word came first, followed by the creation of things in the heavens, on the earth, in the waters, and finally, human beings. The word preceded all things; it was the very power that brought them into being.

Now, when this Hebrew word "word" (dabar) was retranslated by the Greeks into the Greek word "logos," another meaning, another concept, was added to it. It became the concept of logic, principle, or reason. As the English word "logic" indicates. The logos was the most ancient thing; the Greeks believed God created the world through it. The Gospel writer John integrated this Hebrew thought with Greek thought, expressing that in Jesus Christ, God's spirit, God's reason, came into this world. God did not create all things on earth blindly or without meaning. Rather, every form of life, every created thing, has meaning and value in its very existence. For all things were created by God. This is the same as how things made by humans have meaning. For example, consider the microphone on the pulpit before me. What material should this microphone be made of? What color should it be? How tall should it be? Furthermore, the maker also considered the property that it should be freely bendable. After pondering these things and seeing the finished microphone, one cannot help but think of what is written in Genesis chapter 1. "Behold, it was very good." The creator rejoices in the work. Celebrating Christmas means approaching all things on earth, created by God with such special meaning, with reverence, respecting each other's existence, and rejoicing together. "You too are loved by God. You too can live joyfully!" Rejoicing in this truth is what it means to celebrate Christmas.

John expresses this event in another way in verse 9: "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world." The Greek word translated as "true" in "the true light" (arētinós) means 'genuine' or "authentic." It signifies something that is not counterfeit. Sadly, even today, groups exist in this world that preach false teachings and doctrines, leading people astray. Or, on a more worldly note, we repeatedly see news reports of people being deceived by offers promising astonishing investment returns based on fictitious schemes. Before Jesus appeared, various other lights existed, and people followed them. Yet, those lights could not lead people to true salvation. Some lost their way along the path, while others were led into darkness and left there. Even in our modern age, with its advanced

science and technology and easy access to diverse information, this situation remains unchanged, does it not? Yet John proclaims that into this world, filled with such “false lights,” came the true light—Jesus Christ. This light shone upon and dispelled many darknesses. First, the darkness of despair vanished. Second, the darkness of doubt disappeared. And third, the darkness of death was banished. In this uncertain age, Jesus Christ is the true light that shows us the way we should walk.

However, I believe the core of the Christmas message recorded in the Gospel of John lies in the words of verse 14 that follow: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” This passage signifies “God taking on human form.” For the Jews, this was unthinkable, utterly astonishing. The word “flesh” (sarx in Greek) is one the Apostle Paul repeatedly uses in Romans to describe human sin. Paul employed this term to show how weak and prone to sin humans are. Yet John applies this same flesh to God. The same expression appears in 1 John 4:2: It states, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” Here too, it declares that “God became human.” The Word of God who created all things, the divine reason, took on complete humanity in Jesus. What happens when God becomes human? In Jesus, we can see the image of God made human in its fullness, 100%, without any part left out.

Why did God become human? It was so that God's word would not merely be written in the Bible, but so that in the New Testament era, the Son of God would walk the earth as God Himself, enabling us to understand God intimately. God did not merely look down upon our troubles, sorrows, and pains from the heavenly realm. Instead, He came to earth, took on human form, and through Jesus—who lived among sinners—He chose to bear those troubles and sorrows together with us. Not only that, but God experienced the sorrow and pain of allowing His only Son to die on the cross. Through this, God's love for us became a reality. The Word becoming flesh means God's word became a visible event. We are weak, and merely hearing words alone makes understanding difficult. That is why God became human. Jesus did not come to earth merely to speak of God's love. Rather, He came to demonstrate God's love through His very life.

I apologize for speaking personally, but it has been exactly four years since I accepted the invitation from Kurigasawa Church and arrived here this past July. For some time after my arrival, I heard opinions and requests from several individuals saying, “We want you to express your opinions more strongly as pastor and really bring out Kimura's unique character.” However, I believe I remained rather reserved on that point. There was a reason for this. Rather than stating my own opinions, I wanted to experience as many joyful events as possible together with the congregation members. I felt that speaking words alone, without those joyful experiences, or with few of them, would lack power. Moreover, when I first arrived, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant we couldn't even properly hold gatherings with many people. It was in this context that the first “Hymn Singing Gathering” was held on May 19, 2023, two and a half years ago. Looking back at the bulletin from that week, attendance for the first gathering was 3 men, 8 women, totaling 11 people. However, last week's Hymn Singing Gathering had 31 attendees. Through each and every gathering, this small group has grown, bringing new encounters and events. The words spoken in church are words woven from concrete reality, are they not? This year, in particular, feels like it has been filled with many such joyful experiences.

In verse 11, which we read today, it says, “The Word came to his own people, but his own people did not receive him.” We must take these words of Scripture seriously. Light illuminates darkness, but it also reveals our sin. Before God, people cannot deceive themselves. Indeed, even in John's time, there were those who disliked being exposed by God's light, who found it troublesome. Yet, in the end, can we not stand before God only as we truly are? No matter how much we try to polish our appearance or maintain appearances, God sees everything clearly. If that is so, I long to look straight at God, honestly confess my own sin and the darkness of my heart before Him, and live within God's love that accepts and forgives all. John writes, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” On this Christmas morning as we offer our worship, I want to engrave anew in my heart the joy of welcoming this Savior into my own heart and acknowledging Him as our Lord.

I pray for you.