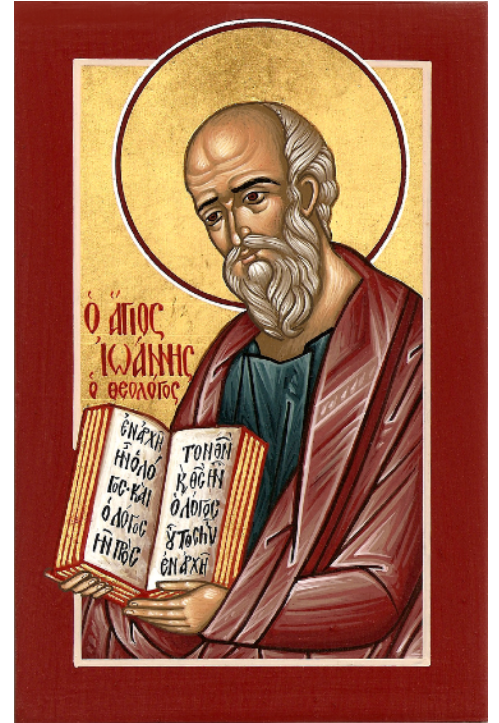
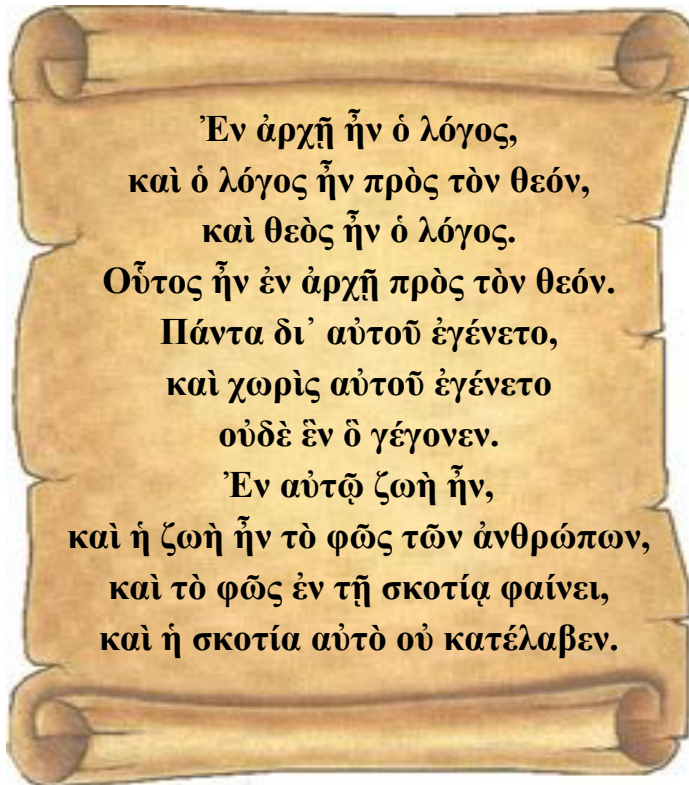


## God: Just What We Always Wanted (to be)

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint John:



I suppose it would be more helpful if I gave that to you in English.

[John 1:1-14]

Before proceeding, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm throwing a lot at you. It's Christmas Day and you probably just wanted to hear the story with Mary and Joseph, and the baby in the manger, and the shepherds and angels, maybe some magi...perhaps a nice and preferably short reflection about peace and love and the brotherhood of man...

...And what do you get but two of the most theologically dense passages of the whole Bible and someone who feels compelled to read the gospel in a dead language only scholars care about. I'm sorry. Permission to grumble about how I ruined Christmas granted, though I'd prefer not during the sermon if you'd be so kind.

## Part One: An overview of John

The gospel this morning begins in the beginning - the same phrase as begins the whole Bible, “In the beginning.” And in the beginning was the Word. And here we are five words in and we need to talk. This “Word” with a capital W is a

λογος

technical philosophical term. It has the idea of “the reason behind all things” or “the pattern behind all creation.” In translation into some Asian languages, it is “In the beginning was the Tao” which has much the same idea.

So, to be clear, word doesn’t refer here to the squiggles of ink you see in your bulletin. Nor does it refer to this [the Bible] even though we do often call it the Word of God. It’s an adequate term for this book, but when it comes down to it, it is not itself the Word, it is *about* the Word.

Some modern translations actually spoil the surprise by just telling you what John means by the Word. Or rather who. Christ.

Yes, it can seem odd that Christ was around before he was born as the man Jesus, but that is what both John and the author of Hebrews tells us. Before the Son of God was born as a human, he existed with God from before time began and it was through him that creation was made.

And despite his having creation based on him, John tells us that the world didn’t know him. But some did. Some did and they were given the power to become something greater than they were, children of God.

And that is the Christmas story. God entered the world of humanity.

## Part Two: God breaks into our Darkness, with Love

And its a good thing he did. Humanity has this habit of getting itself into trouble. In case you hadn’t noticed, people can be stupid. They can also be cruel. They also can forget who they are as human beings. They forget that people can be wonderful. And they can sink into despair. Things can get very dark. And when that happens, people don’t function as the images of God they were created to be.

## God: Just What We Always Wanted (to be)

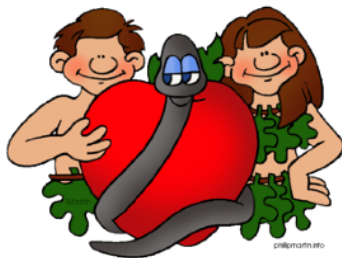
Now, on a purely human level, there are things that we know help. And things we think will. Trying to change our thinking and our beliefs, “thinking positive,” “being the change.” And if you’ve tried that, congratulations, because that is really tough, and something you really have to do for yourself. When it is someone else, good luck trying to change them.

what does work is to begin with unconditional love and trust, essentially giving up on that grand plan to change people. How do you get through to someone who’s scared and shut down, you love them and forget about changing them. You spend time with them, earn their trust. And from there, the world just sort of opens up and growth becomes possible. And this is exactly the model that God decided to use.

He had this unconditional love for us, so he joined us, sharing our experience of being human. He showed himself to be worthy of our own trust and love. He led with love and acceptance and trust, and wouldn’t force people to change, even when it meant they would kill him. That kind of love is incredibly powerful. And it is that kind of love that gives us a chance. But not just a chance at being decent human beings. John says we are given the power to become the children of God.

### **Part Three: Wait, there’s more. God makes it possible to be like him**

That’s what we’ve wanted all along. Think back to Genesis. We’re in this lush paradise with Adam and Eve, and a certain serpent... What is it that the serpent says?



“Thou needest more variety in thy diet,  
try the fruit of yonder tree”

“Behold the super-fruit,  
for it hath all the antioxidants thou shalt ever need”

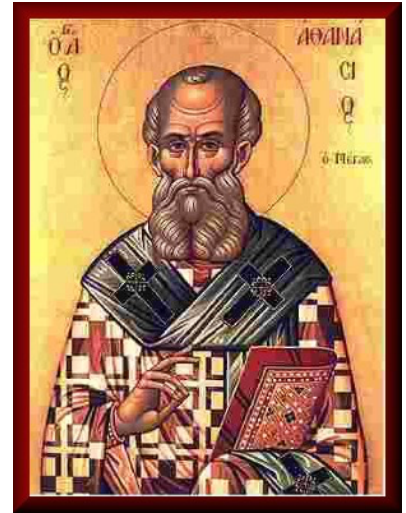
“It shall help thou lose weight  
and shall cure thine cancer”

no, as I recall, the selling point was

“your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”  
Right, so that’s what got us into this mess, the desire to be like God.

## God: Just What We Always Wanted (to be)

And here's the unbelievable part, God makes a way for us to do just that. He took on the existence of a human of a human being. And being both human and God, he united divinity with humanity in his person. So that in being joined to him, one can come to share in that divinity. There is a saying from Athanasius, one of the early Church Fathers: **“God became man, so that man might become God.”**



Before you start throwing things at me, because I know, that sounds entirely objectionable and impossible and wrong, just think, man becoming God [scoff] Just know this

God often does do objectionable and unexpected things  
(healing on the Sabbath, talking with women, ...became a man)  
the Christian God is a *loving* God characterized by  
forgiveness, mercy, and self-sacrifice.

Quite frankly, if more people want to aspire to be that loving, I really don't have a problem with that.

The church doesn't either, at least not the early church. Naturally though this idea of man becoming God lends itself to all sorts of problems, because we are not God. The theologians of the first few centuries helpfully clarified what they were talking about by making a distinction between God in essence and God's energies. We may never be God in the same way God is God, we won't - that is not the goal, but we can participate in his energies of love and peace and joy, just by opening ourselves to him and allowing him to work through us.

*Now to the One, who by the power at work within us,  
is able to do far more abundantly than all we can ask or imagine,  
to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus  
to all generations, forever and ever.*

***Amen.***