

# Reading John's words

The Gospel brings us the Word, living among us



**Words are powerful. John knows that. He used them to get at the heart of the story of Jesus Christ—to bring it home, break it on down and dress it all up.**

*Clark is pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Chicago, (postmark lutheran@yahoo.com). He preached at the Book of Faith Jubilee gathering in St. Paul, Minn., in August.*

**W**e in the ELCA come to this Christmas in the midst of the Book of Faith initiative—with all our members encouraged to dwell in the word. We open our Bibles once again to the Gospel of John.

Wordsmith extraordinary who has his head in the clouds, John reminds us of who God is: the Word. John tells us how the Word, this theoretical thing, became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth.

The word has special meaning to both the Jews and the Greeks. The Jews knew that God spoke in the beginning and *there was*. That's the story of creation: the Spirit moved, but God spoke. God spoke at various times for 1,500 consecutive years from Moses to Malachi.

Hebrews 1:1-2 reminds us that "long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds."

God created the world by the word. The Greeks also know that the word, *logos*, was a key term often referring to the power of reason, undergirding all creation. What I want to further suggest is that God spoke the gospel through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—but it is in John, the last to be written, where the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us.

Now, let me press the skip-scene button and go to the last clip where we learn the purpose of this book (John 20:30-31). "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book."

But is the next word that appears, and in the English language *but* is a conjunction. John wants to remind us that there is more: "But these (words) are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."



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And once again in this Christmas, we talk about the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).

Capitalized, *Word* means something altogether different from a *word*, John tells us. It is a proper name, a synonym for something else. He makes the point that the Word is not new but has a cosmic pre-existence. Before anything else existed, the Word did, it was with God.

Jesus is this Word, conceived by the Spirit, born of a virgin and now flesh-and-blood. The Word speaks of healing, and a woman is healed. The Word speaks of new life, and Lazarus is raised from the dead.

Now, in these days of this Christmas, the Word calls you and me out of our sin and brings us to new life. The Word saves sinners, reclaims backsliders and encourages believers. □

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