Well Happy New Year, and we’re still in the Christmas Season so a blessed Christmas to you as well. And let’s begin with the promise that you were given in your baptism. That you are loved and forgiven and God will raise you from the dead. Don’t look at yourself, or think about yourself for a minute. Don’t look what you have or haven’t done last year, or what you need to change this year. Don’t look at anything about you at all. Forget yourself for a minute. Lose the focus on yourself. Jesus said, “You have to lose your life in order to find it”. So lose yourself for a minute and Just hear the Word of God that you are loved and forgiven for Jesus sake. Done. It’s a promise from God and God keeps his promises. And it would be a great way to begin a New Year. You are loved and forgiven and God will raise you from dead.

Notice in our lesson today that the Word of God is this Jesus who is with us. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And this Word of course is Jesus, that’s obvious there, right? But it’s important to say, because we often lose this. The Word of God sometimes simply becomes the Bible. That’s the only way with think of the Word of God. As this book. So let’s take care of this a little bit, and focus here on how the Word of God is Jesus here. The Word is a person who is with us, not a book. And we call the Bible the Word of God because it reveals this reality of Jesus Christ.

We are often tempted to use the Bible in a way that doesn’t reveal Christ at all. Instead, the Bible becomes the law. When all else fails, read the instructions. No. Wrong. That’s why John today says that the Law was given through Moses, Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ. He’s beginning to clear up this confusion about God’s Word. Jesus is the Word of God and the Bible is the Word as it reveals his presence. When all else fails, don’t read the instructions, trust the way the Scripture can reveal God’s presence to you. That’s actually a big difference in how you think. The Bible is meant to bring Christ to you, not Moses the Law giver. Very, very important to get this, because the Christianity around us often doesn’t. We live in a culture where the Bible is often understood as almost a substitute for God, often worshiped as God, and that spells trouble. This is the Gospel of John and he begins with a very clear understanding of what we mean by God’s Word. It’s the coming to us of the presence and power of the person of Jesus.

And how does this presence and power of the Word come to us? So important, John wants us to get this right away. First things first How does this Word come to us? By becoming flesh and living among us. So the Word God comes to us in the reality of the flesh. In the form of a real human person. Not God in a man suit, not half God half man, there’s not a part of him that is human and another part that is God. He doesn’t just look like a person. Jesus reveals God’s presence by becoming fully human. The Word of God cannot be revealed apart from that which is fully human. And this is not something that just happened 2,000 years ago. It’s how God comes to us today. The Word comes to us all the time, in that which is most fully human. God isn’t revealed apart from the flesh.

Again, this is just so important. Because where do we tend to put God? Yeah, up there. And we’re down in the flesh. But one day we’ll die and when we there guess what will be gone. Our flesh. Even though we say in the creed every week that we believe in the resurrection of the body, our bodies and their desires are often seen as a hindrance to God. In order to find God we need to deny the flesh. This is huge, and we are often very uncomfortable with our bodies and how they work and what they do. We don’t like the bodies limitations and weaknesses, and often we may even be encouraged to live in this world of the Spirit, unencumbered by the flesh. The flesh is weak, it breaks, it can hurt. The flesh is seen as sin. So we try to find God in some kind of spiritual realm. Dancing, sexuality, feelings even, just get in the way of this spiritual reality that is above the sorry reality of the body and its’ desires. What is most human is often looked at even with a kind of contempt and shame.

So it is interesting indeed that from the git go, the Gospel of John says that the Word comes to us by becoming flesh. That which is most human. Which begs the question of course. What is most human? What is the reality of the flesh? We might look in that direction for a little bit during Christmas. But it seems to go away fairly rapidly once we get back to normal. God is soon primarily back up there pulling switches for us or something. So we need to think about what is most human. Because that’s the means that God uses to be present with us. Put it another way. The spiritual does not come to us apart from the physical. This is why we have the sacraments of baptism and communion. God comes to us as we eat and drink. As we get washed. What’s more human that eating and drinking together, or that baby getting washed clean by their parent? Get the idea? We’ve got to stop putting God primarily “up there” and learn to see God deeply in the flesh.

So what does it mean to be human? To be made of flesh? I’ve already used some of the words that capture I think the reality of the flesh. Yesterday, how long would you have lasted outside without proper protection? Not very long. 20 minutes maybe and that would be it for you at least at about 2 p.m.. And I think that is probably what the flesh means to us most of all. Our flesh is our vulnerability. We have to cover it and protect it. From the sun, from the cold, from snake bites and mosquitos. Our flesh is our vulnerability. And so the incarnate message in part would be that God comes to us in our vulnerability. And we see that message clearly at Christmas in the birth of Jesus don’t we? There he is completely vulnerable. His family is completely vulnerable. Soon they are refugees. Can you see the vulnerability of a refugee? God’s Word comes to us in human form. The Word comes to us in our vulnerability. God is coming to us in the flesh.

What would life be like without touch? Or a hug once in a while? To have a dream? To feel the warmth of the sun, or the sorrow of the loss of a friend? What is more human? Isn’t it interesting how some small little physical thing, can mean the most. A locket of someones hair, or a little box made by your grandfather years ago? There’s a show on television about a repair shop in England, that fixes up old stuff. And a gal brought in an old fashioned pen that her father always kept. Now it didn’t work anymore, and so the repair shop fixed it up and got it working again. And when she saw it, she said it would now be her most important possession. Couldn’t be more human, so couldn’t be more divine. The most meaningful things I’ve seen are all made by human hands. Little doilies or a crayon picture made by one of your kids. Nothing is more real than these things, or carry more meaning or love. These are expressions of the incarnate God who is revealed in that which is most human. And when you catch on to this you begin to realize that the Word is coming to you all over the place. Grace and mercy come in the flesh. In that which is most human.

It’s a challenge to a kind of religion that wants to live on some kind of higher spiritual level. Unaffected by the weaknesses of the flesh. I was listening to a news report about the tornados that hit Mayfield Kentucky a few weeks ago. And they were interviewing a pastor of the local church there. And behind him was the church, badly damaged by the winds. And when they asked him what he was saying to his congregation, this was his reply. He said, “It’s easy to have faith when things are going your way. But it’s harder when times are tough. Then he said what he told his congregation, “I told them that the whole world is watching you, to see if you are going to remain faithful, that we have an opportunity to show that nothing will shake our belief in God”. It just gave me a start. Is this how you’re going to respond to this destruction all around you? I could see what he was saying in a way, and maybe it’s the right answer. But I still couldn’t buy it. Be an example. What I heard was don’t show a vulnerability, don’t be weak, don’t show the pain. Above all don’t ask the hard questions.

But then, they switched to a different reporter in a different part of the town. And there was a woman standing there, looking at her home that had been destroyed and she was trying to pick up a few things that might be left that she recognized in the massive mess. And when the reporter asked her how she was coping, she just looked up and said, “Why? Why did this happen? I have a friend who died in this. I don’t know what to do now. I don’t know where to go.” Quick question. Which person better revealed the Word made flesh? Which person reflected more the the reality of our vulnerability, our weakness, our ability to be hurt? Which person then would reflect the form in which God comes to us?