

**December 2, 2007**  
**First Sunday of Advent**  
**“The Wonder of Christmas”**

John 1:1-5,10-14 NLT

In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. 4 Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. 5 The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

10 But although the world was made through him, the world didn't recognize him when he came. 11 Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan--this rebirth comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

My grandparents lived in Brooklyn and we were usually at their house on Christmas Eve. They owned a two family house and one year their tenants, who had two small children, a boy and a girl, asked if my grandfather could come upstairs and pretend to be Santa Clause. My father, who was a fabulous tailor made his father a Santa's outfit. Parts were made from a furry pile type material. We laughed as we tied a pillow around his waste and helped him get into his costume. I said, “grandpa, what are you going to say when you get upstairs?” And he replied with his Italian accent, “Ho, Ho, I'ma Santa Clauza!” And we said, “you better just stick to ho, ho, if you say anything more than that the children are going to know who you really are!”

My cousins and I, with our parents were invited upstairs and while we were visiting we suddenly heard, “look who's here, Santa Clause!” The children were so excited. The little girl just stared in amazement and the boy was literally jumping up and down for joy.

My grandfather just stood there repeating, “Ho, Ho...ho, ho” until someone whispered in Italian for him to sit down and take the presents out of his bag for the kids. He sat down and the children wanted to sit on his lap. Their father went to get the “movie camera” (we did not have video cameras in those days, but a movie camera). The camera could be attached into a handle that had two huge lights. They made everything as bright as a night game at Shea Stadium and the lights got really hot. Between the hot lights, the hot costume, and the children who were all over him, my grandfather started saying, “Ho, ho, too warm! Ho, ho to warm!” The little boy said, “he sounds like Mr. Bonfiglio.” And someone said, “ok, Santa has to leave now!”

Fast forward about twenty years and a friend of mine asked if I could come over to his sister's house on Christmas Eve and dress in a Santa Clause costume that his family had

purchased. His parents had five of their own children and were foster parents to twin boys. They were having a behavioral problem with one of the twins, I believe his name was Brian. The foster dad kept telling him, "Brian, you better start being good or Santa Clause is not going to bring you any presents." And Brian would say, "Aw, there ain't no such thing as Santa Clause."

My friend's sister lived in a "high ranch." When you walked in the front door you were in a small foyer then you could go up stairs to the living room, or down stairs to a den. They snuck me in and downstairs to get into costume. Then they put me outside and told me to wait a few minutes, before ringing the door bell, so they could give the signal that everything was ready for the appearance of "Santa." I wait, rang the bell and waited some more as upstairs the conversation was going something like this, "Who could that be? I don't know, maybe it's Santa Clause! Let me look out the window and see. I think I do see Santa. Where, I don't see anyone..." While this conversation was going on, I was still standing outside, in the cold. Suddenly, there started to be some snow flurries. I thought that was a nice touch. Then cars passing noticed me and began honking, and of course I waved.

Someone finally came to let me in. You should have seen the look on Brian's face when I came up those stairs and walked into the living room – shock and awe! As I said, "Ho, ho, ho Merry Christmas!" The foster dad, noticing how wide Brian's eyes and mouth were opened decided to get as much mileage out of this as he could, so he said, "No, Santa Clause huh, Brian?" Then he looked at me and nodded toward Brian with his head and eyes. So I said, "Ho, Ho, have you been a good boy, Brian?" And the foster dad said, "Tell Santa, Brian, you haven't been very good have you?" Brian looked at his dad and then at me and shook his head, no. Trying to get Brian off the hook, I said, "you are going to do better aren't you, Brian?" Brian stared at me and nodded, yes. I said, "I know you are" and padded him on the head.

When it was time for "Santa" to leave they faked me going out the front door and snuck me down stairs to get out of costume, then back out the front door so I could ring the bell and enter as myself. I came up and said hello. Then I noticed Brian staring at me. Suddenly, he burst out saying, "you were him, you were Santa Clause." His foster dad said, "What are you talking about, he wasn't Santa." And Brian said, "Yes he was I can tell by his eyebrows!" And the wonder that was suppose to cause the transformation of Brian's life failed.

Today I want to talk to you about ***the wonder of Christmas that will not fail to transform lives.*** In our text for today we are told that the Word (referring to Christ) always existed. He was with God in the beginning, and he was God. In the beginning He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn't make. In Gen 1:1-4 (NLT) it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was empty, a formless (*chaotic*) mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface (*like a bird – dove*). 3 Then God said (there is 'The Word' that created all things), "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that it was good." So we see The Triune God in creation, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and all things were

created through the Word. (John 1:1 “In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God.”) The Word was Christ and the Word was God. Then the most incredible, amazing, and wonderful thing happened. (v14) “...the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.” This is the wonder of Christmas. God, the creator of all things, became a human and lived here on earth among us, His creation (the theological term for this is The Incarnation). This would alter the world forever. This amazing event that we celebrate at Christmas, that Jesus, a baby in a manger is God, ought to cause awe, amazement, astonishment - wonder. Like the description of the earth in Gen 1 our lives were empty, chaotic, cloaked in darkness and in need of transformation. ***God in Christ came to us to bring about that transformation.*** [ILLUSTRATION].

He became like us to show us the way to be saved, and to save us. (vs 12-13) “... all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan--this rebirth comes from God.”

During Advent we are going to talk about ***the Wonder of Christmas that bring transformation.*** Christ brings:

Light to a world of darkness (v 5 “The light shines through the darkness”)

Love to a world of hate (v14 “He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.”)

Life to a world of death (v4 “Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone.”)

I asked Willie Costa to be an illustration today. He is going to come to tell us the miracle of transformation that occurred in his life because of the coming of Jesus.