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John 1:1-5, 14

Jesus’ Work: Where is God?

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John 1:1-5, 14 NRSV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

 We have been looking for the last few weeks at Martin Thielen’s book, *What’s the Least I Can Believe and Still Be a Christian?* We looked at things Christians don’t need to believe. I shared with you that I reject any religion that claims God causes cancer, car wrecks or other catastrophes. I reject religion that claims good Christians don’t doubt. I reject religion that says it’s okay for Christians to be judgmental and obnoxious. We talked about how Jesus is what we believe as Christians. Jesus is who we hold onto. When God becomes flesh in Jesus, God joins us, God becomes one with us in all that we are and in all that we do. I can’t imagine my life without Jesus. Jesus is the reason I am here right now. Jesus is the reason I got up this morning, Jesus is the reason 18 of us went to Juarez last weekend to work with Proyecto Abrigo and build a home for a family. All 18 of us loved getting to know Hector, Alejandra, and their two sons Ian and Abraham and as we blessed their home last Monday, we laid our hands on the home where they would sleep, eat, laugh, grow, learn, and live life together. Hector shared with us the joy that he had that his family now had a home and how thankful he was to God and how thankful he was to us. I thought about that phrase, Jesus with skin on. For Hector, the 18 of us represented “Jesus with skin on”.

 Late one stormy night a small voice was heard from the bedroom across the hall. “Mommy, I’m scared!” The mom responded sympathetically, “Honey, don’t be afraid, I’m right across the hall.” After a short time, with thunder snapping in the distance, the little voice says again, “I’m still scared!” Mom replies, “You don’t need to be afraid. Close your eyes and pray. And remember that Jesus is always with you.” The next time the pause is longer … but the voice returns along with a little child standing next to her bed, “Mommy, can I get in bed with you?” As the mom is just about to lose her patience, her little boy catches her eyes and says, “Mommy, I know that Jesus is always with me, but right now I need Jesus with skin on.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

I want to be Jesus with skin on. I want to be a witness of Jesus’ love to everyone that I meet. And I am so thankful to be a part of Greenland Hills where I see “Jesus with skin on” in you. A few years ago Kathleen Harris wrote a song “You are the only Jesus some will ever see.” The lyrics go like this:“If not you, I wonder where will they ever find the One who really cares? If not you, how will they find the One who heals the broken heart, gives sight to the blind? If not you, I wonder who, will show them love, and love alone can make things new? If not you, how will they learn there’s one who’ll trade their hopelessness for joy in return? Cause you’re the only Jesus some will ever see, you’re the only words of life, some will ever read. So let them see in you the One in whom is all they’ll ever need. You’re the only Jesus, some will ever see.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

 That means our talk must always match our way of life. And we must walk the walk not just talk the talk. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says “follow my example, as I follow the example of Jesus the Christ.” And Ephesians 3:10 says it is “through the church that the wisdom of God in its rich variety might be made known.” In John 20:21 Jesus tells us, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Jesus is asking us to go out as the church and be his hands and feet. Jesus is asking us to go out and heal the sick, raise the dead, stand for justice, and fight for the poor. Jesus is asking us to go out and love unconditionally, give selflessly, serve unreservedly. Jesus is asking us to take this little light of ours and let it shine because we may be the only Jesus some will ever see..[[3]](#footnote-3)

 There are times in my life when I have wondered where God is. And then someone smiles at me, or gives me a hug, or I see someone do an act of kindness for another, and I am reminded that God works most clearly through people. Jesus gathered 12 imperfect people around him. Those 12 brought in more, those 12 brought in more. All these to do God’s work. This is how God works in our world and in our lives.

I invite you to imagine with me the day that Jesus returned to heaven after the 40th day of Easter. The angel Gabriel greeted Jesus and asked him who Jesus had left to carry on Jesus’ work? Jesus told Gabriel about the disciples, this ragtag group of fisherman who were imperfect. Gabriel asked Jesus, “What if they let you down?” Jesus said, “Well, then all that I have done will come to nothing.” The angel Gabriel said with disbelief, “don’t you have a back-up plan?” Jesus said “No, there is no back-up plan. They are it.” They are it, we are it.

 Where is God? God is in you, God is in me, God is in us when we work together. Sometimes when we are looking for God, we look right past people. We are looking for something, looking for someone else. Martin Thielen in his book tells a story about a woman who locked her keys in her car with her phone inside. She is feeling very desperate and she prays, dear God help me. A very rough looking guy walks toward her, and he asks if he can help. She gives him the coat hanger and within 30 seconds her car door is open. She thanks him and remarks what a nice man he is. He says to her, I’m not a nice man. I have been in prison for the last 2 years for auto theft, I just got out today. And the woman looks at him, and says, well, God sent me a professional to help me.

 I want to share with you and celebrate with how we have been Jesus with skin on this past year. As you watch and listen, may we all celebrate that God is in us when we work together. God is here at Greenland Hills, praise be to God.

(Show State of the Church powerpoint.)

1. http://www.mcpinney.com/jesus-with-skin-on/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://walterbright.org/2013/07/20/you-are-the-only-jesus-some-will-ever-se>e/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://walterbright.org/2013/07/20/you-are-the-only-jesus-some-will-ever-se>e/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)