

SERMON: "AMONG US"

**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT
NEW TESTAMENT**

**JEREMIAH 31:7-14
JOHN 1:1-18**

**January 4, 2026
Second Sunday of Christmas**

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INTRODUCTION

Do you have a favorite word? I do. If you have a favorite word, I'd love for you to tell me what it is and why it is your favorite. I might be a nerd (ok, not might be) but I think that would be a fun conversation

My favorite word is worldview. It is straightforward – how do you see the world? Is it small, medium, large or extra-large? Is it good or bad or a mixed bag? Is it something you want to keep out, protect yourself from? Is it something you want to jump in and explore?

For almost a dozen years now I've been talking with you, asking you about your worldview. I'm one of those people who sees the world as something that I want to jump in and explore. As a fellow sojourner in this world, I've tried to be that kid in the pool telling you to jump in with me telling you the water feels fine ... not too cold

Let's talk worldview a bit more. John is the one who gets us talking and thinking about worldview – how we see the world, how God sees the world I absolutely love how he gives us a vantage point for God's view of the world that is both macro, as big as big can get – cosmic and micro – up close and personal, intimate

We start with the widest frame

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 overtake it.

John introduces us to Jesus by taking us all the way back to "in the beginning." He doesn't name him as of yet. He will get to that, he's building up to it. He starts with a worldview, with the creative Word – capital W who not only is with God, but is God and is in on the act of creation All things come into being (a world full of things) through the Word

This pairs well with the worldview of the creation stories in Genesis, "and it was good" How good this creation is. The beginning of John's gospel intentionally makes that connection to creation to help us see the world ... and Jesus' place in it

LIKE JIM

First Jesus is introduced to us as the creative Word

Then John introduces Jesus as the light that comes into the world

The light that shines and has not, will not, be overtaken by darkness

John then starts to mix his imagery together – the creative Word,
the light come into the world, and then the incarnate Word

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

I remember the church I served in Georgia and the Grand Sweep Bible study we did

We read our way together through the bible from Genesis through Revelation

We did the same thing here – twice. I remember Jim and his great sense of humor

He sat in the back and when my illustrations wandered a bit, he would

hold up his hands and hold them a distance apart pointing one toward the other

It was his way of saying “I don’t see the connection.” Then as I would try to finish making my point, Jim would move his hands closer together, extend his fingers like the Sistine Chapel and even shake them as if to say, “you’re getting closer.”

Then, on most occasions, he’d touch his fingers together and smile

I know given your great sense of humor, some of you might try that

You could be like Jim with your hands hopefully getting closer together

Fine by me if you want to try that, especially if you sit in the back

Might be a little awkward if Johnny were to start doing that up front

I feel like Jim reading through John, chapter one. John takes us back to creation

then talks about light in the darkness, then introduces John the Baptist whose job

it is to point to the light, then he tells us that this Word, who is also the light

who was also there in the beginning ... has come into the world

And maybe you notice the worldview seems to change a bit

The world did not know this light. His own people did not accept him

Here it sounds like there is more darkness than there is light

Sounds like the world is actually a scary place, not so welcoming

The bible does talk about the world that way too. Think “be in the world but not of it.” The world really is a bit of both, isn’t it? Darkness and light?

Everything from “come on in, the water is fine” to “be careful out there”

to “no trespassing.” I think John is playing with the dimmer switch.

He starts big and bright, then dims things a bit ... then the spotlight

WITH US

A spotlight on the light coming into the darkness and forever transforming
not only the darkness of that time and place, but changing the world for good

**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. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ")
From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.**

This is God moving from that macro view of the world to the micro
God didn't just make this big, beautiful world and leave it to us like a watch on the beach – an image of God favored by Thomas Jefferson, a deist (an enlightenment worldview shared by many of the founding fathers)
No, God shows up in person, in the flesh, in Jesus, God's only son

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The original Greek word for dwelt literally means to "pitch tent." He moved in, unpacked his bags, going to be here for a good long while. He is here!

How might Jesus' presence in this world shape your view of the world?

Matthew in introducing us to Jesus calls him "Emmanuel" God with us

He does so by quoting the prophet Isaiah. John is saying the same thing here when he talks about the Word becoming flesh ... God is with us ... With us

That is so much more than a watch on the beach

You know it took me a little bit to have the eyes to see Iowa

The Good Lord needed to do a little work on my worldview, expand my vision
When I interviewed here I got lost taking Beth and Grace back to the airport in Cedar Rapids. I got on Highway 20 and missed the turn south, kept going toward Dubuque – at that point, it all looked like cornfields to me.

Later Beth and I went on a little road trip south (close to the Missouri state line)

to buy some stained glass from an artist who was retiring for health reasons.

That's when I found out Google will give you directions that include gravel roads

Got a little turned around in the middle of a bunch of cornfields following those directions. I told Beth, "Well if I'm going to get lost, it makes me feel better being lost with you." I'm quite the romantic ... every once in a while.

There are times, plenty of them when I have gotten lost (or stuck in a snowdrift)

and in those times the world felt a little scarier, a little darker

Maybe all I could see in the moment was the corn or the beans ... or the snow

But in terms of how I have seen the world, how I still see the world

I intentionally see it with a sense of courage and hopefulness

SUMMARY

I see it that way because the living God is among us
In the fields and the snow of Iowa ... among us
In the bumper to bumper traffic of Atlanta ... among us
In the rubble and ruins of Kyiv and Gaza ... among us
In the chaos of Caracas ... among us

At the table ... among us
At the end of one year and the beginning of another ... among us
In good times and bad ... among us
And, yes, Mr. Jefferson, on the beach ... among us

That is how I see the world. That's my worldview
It is an "among us" worldview. It's an "among us" worldview ...
like how I find all those little Jesus figures around the church still,
the ones the kid put everywhere back at the beginning of the school year.
I like the one on the baptismal font where Jesus is leaning on one arm.

Jesus is with us, among us ... all over the place
And on the loose