

An IN PERSON Christmas: Friend

December 19, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point for 2021:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "*Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you*" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Exodus 33:11a NRSV *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.*

John 1: 14-17 NRSV; ¹⁴ *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.*

¹⁶ *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷ *The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

This Week: John 1:15-17

Our Bibles simply read that the "Word" (Jesus) became flesh (human) and "lived among us". The verb rendered by a simple, one-word 'lived' has a far richer meaning that can be gleaned from the average English translation. "To make one's dwelling" or "to pitch the tent" (v. 14b) is rich with OT associations, because it recalls God's promise to dwell with God's people (Ezek 37:27). It comes from the same root as the noun for "tabernacle" or "tent" the place where God spoke to Moses "face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exod 33:9-11). It was also where God's glory was seen at the tabernacle (Exod 40:34). These allusions are John's way of communicating that Jesus is the new tabernacle, where we might see God's glory and communicate "as one speaks to a friend."

The word "Glory" (*doxa*, v. 14c) and "to glorify" figure prominently in the fourth Gospel. John picks up the OT sense of "glory" as the manifest presence of God

and confesses that this presence is now visible in the humanity of the incarnate Word, Jesus. As the Fourth Gospel's narrative unfolds, it will become clear that for the Fourth Evangelist, the fullest expression of Jesus' glory is found in his death, resurrection, and ascension (7:39; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31). "The Father's only Son" is a characteristic Johannine way of speaking of the relationship between God and Jesus. It emphasizes Jesus' unique ("One and Only," NIV) relationship with God. "Full of grace and truth" echoes the Hebrew word pair "steadfast love" and "truth" (Exod 34:6) that speaks of God's covenantal love and faithfulness. The concentration of OT language and imagery intensifies as the focus of the Prologue turns from the eternal Word to the epic story of the Word that became flesh and lived ("pitched the tent") among us.

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol IX, p. 522-23

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Moses is described as meeting with God in 'face to face' friendship in the "tent of meeting," serving as an intermediary between the Lord and the people. Why do you think Moses was singled out for this 'backstage pass'? Were the others not qualified, not interested, or both?
2. John 1:17 reminds us that "the law indeed was given through Moses." Why was the law so important for this newly freed mass of former slaves?
3. Time and again the children of Israel did not live up to their calling to be obedient to the law and to be an example for others (a 'light to the nations'). Was it a matter of not knowing the right thing to do or something else? Why do we humans have such difficulty following instructions?
4. In contrast with Moses' exclusive friendship with God, personally experiencing God's glory in the tent of meeting, John tells us that Jesus 'lived' among us (literally, "pitched the tent") and we have seen his glory. How does Jesus' offer of friendship empower us to follow his way of love?
5. Verse 17 contrasts the gift of the law through Moses with the greater gift of grace and truth through Jesus. What can "grace and truth" offer that the law cannot?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC and/or journal in the "*Morning by Morning*" gratitude resource.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: John 1:14-17
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. ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.