



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • [www.standrewsaa.org](http://www.standrewsaa.org)

## Sermon for Sunday, December 30, 2018

*The First Sunday after Christmas*

FR. ALAN GIBSON

Isaiah 61:10--62:3 | Psalm 147:13-21 | Galatians 3:23-25, 4:4-7 | John 1:1-18

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every month or so, I visit the J2A class on Sunday morning. Instead of a formal lesson, the time is spent with these young teenagers asking me questions that have come out of their group discussions. At some point each year I'm asked, 'why did you become a priest?' How I respond is to take a step back from that question and talk about why I am a Christian. That's a question I don't ever remember being asked. (Sometimes Episcopalians can be too polite.) The short answer, one that I might use with 14 & 15-year-olds is that I believe that since God made people in many different ways, God is revealed to humanity in many different ways. I've known too many non-Christians with an incredibly profound faith to believe otherwise. But getting back to me, God, as revealed in Jesus Christ makes the most sense, to me. Therefore, following Christ, his teachings, his example, his sacrifice is what has to shape my life. I don't claim to be very good at it, but it's what I hope to do. Other people may see or come to God along different paths. If I am going to follow the example of Christ, then it is not my place or responsibility to judge them. That's God's job. That usually sparks enough conversation to take up the remainder of the class time.

But if we could go a little further, I might say that contrary to the basic teachings of the Christian Faith, the reason why I am a Christian is not so much about what happened on Easter morning. That event is important and I believe that Jesus rose from the dead. (What else could God do in that situation?) But belief in the Resurrection of Jesus is not the most significant aspect of my faith. What we heard in today's gospel, that's why I am a Christian.

"The Word became Flesh and lived among us..." At a particular point in time, God became a living, breathing, feeling, aching human being. Not for a mere 33 years and then to disappear into history, but to live for all ages and times and generations. God went through life, more or less as you and I are going through it now, facing the same temptations, the same pains, experiencing joy, and

enduring the same disappointments that we do. God got tired and excited, and lived the life of the people God created. God, who created everything – all that we see and know and imagine – chose to become human, to take on the same flesh as ours, and just live. God is shown to us in Jesus, and in Jesus, God lets us get close and intimate – "the Word became Flesh."

The reason why I am a Christian is that in Jesus, God shows that we do not have to live in fear, instead we can live in God's love for us. Jesus is God's way of showing us that what God needs from us more than anything else is our love. Christ is the love that will never fail, even when our imperfect love fails God and our own selves. God's love for us has nothing to do with what we've earned or deserve, it's about the simple reality that God moved heaven and earth so that we could see God completely vulnerable, and then come to God in the same way, as we are, not as who we, or anyone else, thinks we should be.

"We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth...It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." There are other things about the Christian faith that we can explore and debate and engage to stimulate our intellect, our talents and our passions – that can be very rewarding and a lot of fun. But if we ever lose sight of God's foundational act of love that saved us in the first place then we can go way off track and the Christianity we practice will not bear much resemblance to the Good News that Jesus preached, and for which he lived and died.

Jesus Christ shows us the love of God. That is what has convinced me, and perhaps you, to call ourselves Christians. After getting a look at God as God is seen in Jesus and experiencing that love first hand, it's hard for me to believe that anything could matter more. I believe that Jesus was born to us to show us that nothing else does.

Merry Christmas.