

# ***Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor***

*December 20, 2020*

*Lesson 3*

## **Becoming God's Children**

### **John 1:10-18**

Although this text does not usually bring to mind Christmas carols and shepherds and wise men, it is one of the most powerful Scriptures about the birth of our Lord. The pre-existent Word (what God had to say) took on human flesh (John 1:14).

The Common English Bible says, "and made his home among us." The New Revised Standard Version says, "and lived among us." Moffatt translates, "and tarried among us." The Emphasized New Testament reads, "and pitched his tent among us." The King James Version notes "and dwelt among us." The Living Bible records, "and lived here on earth." The Message puts it this way: "and moved into the neighborhood." John Wesley translated it: "and tabernacled among us."

I might say "And lived in Bahama, North Carolina." You might say, "And walked around in Portland, Maine." Or, "And was seen in Greencastle, Indiana." Or, "And was at home in North Port, Florida." It begins to kick in: Jesus took his breaths in the same air that we breath, had dealings with folks like the ones we encounter, and was tested by daily life's temptations. As the writer of Hebrews has written, "Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. This was so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, in order to wipe away the sins of the people. He's able to help those who are being tempted, since he himself experienced suffering when he was tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18; see also Hebrews 4:15.) The bottom line: We are left with no excuse. Our Lord has been where we are and calls us to follow him even in that very place. He's been there. He knows what it is like. And still we are called ourselves to be children of God (John 1:12).

John is clear that we are God's children, not by our good works or by our getting it all figured out, but by God's free grace (verse 13). In the Wesleyan tradition, we put it like this: God's searching grace (prevenient grace) comes among us (verse 11). If we welcome that grace, accept that gift, we are made right with God by God's gift (verse 13; justifying grace). Then, we are set free to live out that grace in holiness (sanctifying grace) because of what God has done (verses 16, 18). Now there's a Christmas gift to love!

**Prayer:** As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "You are still among us, Holy Word, so shower us with the grace of your presence."

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