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This Week at Ascension

John the Evangelist

By Frederick Buechner

[Link to Service Leaflets for Christmas Eve/Day, December 24/25](#)

[Link to Service Leaflets for Christmas Day, December 25](#)

[Link to Barb Mansfield's sermon "Angels without Wings"](#)

[Link to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington's Website](#)

John was a poet, and he knew about words. He knew that all men and all women are mysteries known only to themselves until they speak a word that opens up the mystery. He knew that the words people speak have their life in them just as surely as they have their breath in them. He knew that the words people speak have dynamite in them and that a word may be all it takes to set somebody's heart on fire or break it in two. He knew that words break silence and that the word that is spoken is the word that is heard and may even be answered. And at the beginning of his Gospel he wrote a poem about the Word that God spoke. When God speaks, things happen, because the words of God aren't just as good as God's deeds; they are God's deeds. When God speaks, John says, creation happens, and when God speaks to the creation, what comes out is not ancient Hebrew or the King James Version or a sentiment suitable for framing in the pastor's study. On the contrary. "The word became flesh," John says (1:14), and that means that when God wanted to say what God is all about and what humankind is all about and what life is all about, it wasn't a sound that emerged, but a man. Jesus was his name. He was dynamite. He was the word of God.

John says nothing about when or where or how he was born. He says nothing about how the Baptist baptized him. There's no account of the temptation in John, or the transfiguration, nothing about how he told people to eat bread and drink wine in his memory once in a while, or how he sweated blood in the garden the night they arrested him, or how he was tried before the Sanhedrin as well as before Pilate. There's nothing in John about the terrible moment when he cried out that God had forsaken him at the very time he needed him most. Jesus doesn't tell even a single parable in John. So what then, according to John, does Jesus do?

He speaks words. He speaks poems that sound much like John's poems, and the poems are about himself. Even when he works his miracles, you feel he's thinking less about the human needs of the people he's working them for than about something else he's got to say about who he is and what he's there to get done. When he feeds a big, hungry crowd on hardly enough to fill a grocery bag, for instance, he says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (6:35). When he raises his old friend Lazarus from the dead, he says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (11:25-26). "I am the gate," he says. "Whoever enters by me will be saved" (10:9). "I am the good shepherd" (10:14), "the light of the world" (8:12), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," he says (14:6) and "The Father and I are one" (10:30).

You miss the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, of course—the one who got mad and tired and took naps in boats. You miss the Jesus who healed people because he felt sorry for them and made jokes about camels squeezing through the eyes of needles and had a soft spot in his heart for easy-going ladies and children who didn't worry about heaven like the disciples because in a way they were already there. There's nothing he doesn't know in John, nothing he can't do, and when they take him in the end, you feel he could blow them right off the map if he felt like it. Majestic, mystical, aloof, the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel walks three feet off the ground, you feel, and you can't help wishing that once in a while he'd come down to earth.

Jesus, for John, is the Jesus he knew in his own heart and the one he believed everybody else could know too if they only kept their hearts open. He is Jesus as the Word that

Calendar Highlights

Friday, December 23

1:00 pm Al-Anon, Library

Saturday, December 24

9:00 pm Overeaters Anonymous—Chapel

11:00 am Al-Anon—Undercroft Commons

11:00 am Overeaters Anonymous—Room 1

5:00 pm Service for Family with Young Children with Christmas Pageant—Main Church

6:15 pm Choir Rehearsal

7:00 Pm Festival Eucharist With Ascension Choir— Main Church

7:00 pm Spanish Christmas Eve Service — Chapel

9:00 pm Festival Eucharist with Ascension Choir— Main Church

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day
10:00 am Service—Main
Church

breaks the heart and sets the feet to dancing and stirs tigers in the blood. He is the Jesus John loved not just because he'd healed the sick and fed the hungry but because he'd saved the world. Jesus as the *mot juste* of God.

Monday, December 26

OFFICE CLOSED

1:00 pm Al-Anon—Library
Overeaters
6:30 pm Anonymous—Room
4
7:00 pm Jr. Girl Scout
Meeting - Room 6

~originally published in *Peculiar Treasures* and later in *Beyond Words*

HEADLINERS

[The King's Birthday](#)
[Christmas Cards for Asbury](#)
[Ascension's Giving Tree](#)

Tuesday, December 27

OFFICE CLOSED

6:00 pm Bible Study—
Ascension House
Codependents
7:00 pm Anonymous—Room
1
Stillwater
7:00 pm Mindfulness Group—
Chapel
8:30 pm Al-Anon—Room 1

LIFELONG LEARNING

[Mind-Body Skills Workshop](#)
[Finding God in the Waves Book Group](#)
[Children's Sunday Morning Music Program](#)
[Cell Groups at Ascension](#)
[Thursday Afternoon Tai Chi Class](#)
[Yoga At Ascension](#)
[Listening Heart Community](#)
[Still Water Mindfulness Practice Group](#)

Wednesday, December 28

1:00 pm Al-Anon—Library
Ensemble
7:00 pm Rehearsal—Main
Church
Overeaters
7:00 pm Anonymous—Room
1
8:00 pm Gamblers'
Anonymous—Chapel

WORSHIP

[Worship Rosters, January-March](#)
[Link to Service Leaflets](#)

SERVICE

[Vestry Nominations](#)
[Men's Shelter Sandwich Making](#)
[The Lord's Table Soup Kitchen](#)
[Gaithersburg HELP](#)

Thursday, December 29

OFFICE CLOSED NO CHOIR REHEARSAL

LIFE AT ASCENSION

[Prayer Request Updates](#)
[Ascension's Cookbook Committee Needs You!](#)

[Link to our Online
Calendar](#)

PUBLICATIONS

[Link to the Annual Report](#)
[December Ascendant](#)
[Together We Shine](#)

Prayers

For Those Whose Lives are Closely Linked With Ours: Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation and Misa Alegra, St. John's Church, Zion Parish, St. John's Church, Broad Creek, St. John's Church, Mt. Rainier, St. John's Church, Georgetown, St. John's Church, Lafayette Square and Iglesia San Juan, St. John's Church, Norwood, St. John's Church, Olney, St. John's Episcopal School, Olney, St. John's Preschool, Washington, DC

Pray for Comfort, Healing, Courage, and Hope:

Joann, Fran, Diane, Monica, Sarah, Roz, Joann, Sandy, Janet and all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

We pray for peace in the world and all who are serving our country here and abroad, especially those in harm's way, and their families.

Equip us and empower us to be witnesses to your love – as advocates and as servants, as ministers of welcome and of hope for all affected by natural disasters, violence, and war.

We pray for all special intentions, and those on our extended Healing Prayer List.

Worship Leaders

Saturday, December 24

The Rev. Randy Lord-Wilkinson, *Rector*

Celebrants The Rev. Javier Garcia-Ocampo, *Assistant to the Rector*

Jason Cutshall, *Seminarian*

7:00: TBA

Readers

9:00: Peg Ruppel, Marsha Sutherland

7:00: Carleton MacDonald

Intercessor

9:00: Gary McLaughlin

7:00: TBA

Chalicians

9:00: Sarah Rubin, name

7:00: James Black, Jonathan Black, name, name

Welcome Team

9:00: Meredith Horan, Dorett Sutherland, Algernon Thomas, name

Musicians

Jerrold Tidwell, *Minister of Music*

The Ascension Choir

Lauren Kingsland, Betty Knight, Carol Parkerton,

Sue Snay, Amy Van Dalinda, Linda Waters, *Soprano*

Betsy Hasegawa, Kristen Keating, Melanie Mitchell, Claire Morin, *Alto*

Jack Ahalt, Curt Lindsay, Carleton MacDonald, *Tenor*

Tony Chukwurah, Gordon Donnelly, David Mitchell, John Pruessner, *Bass*

Sunday, December 25

Celebrant

(The Rev.) Randy Lord-Wilkinson

Acolyte

Lisa Dickson

Readers

Marsha Sutherland,
Gordon Donnelly,
Christopher Ruggeri

Chalicians

Laura Shay

Welcome Team

Algernon Thomas, Janet King

Prayers of People

Enid Cole

Organist

Jerrold Tidwell

