

February 22

The Medium Is the Message – What do you think?

“... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14a)

Consider the difference between an hourglass and a digital watch. Both measure time. But the similarities pretty much end there. Similarly, when you drink out of a silver chalice, versus a paper cup, no matter if the drink is the same, somehow the “drinking” is different.

I would suspect that when people see an hourglass, they don't just think about the passing of time; they think about time itself – and the very end of time! The digital watch is more cyclical. When the numbers switch over from 11:59 to 12:00, an image appears that is very different from seeing the last few grains of sand emptying out of the top of the hourglass, and into the bottom. When you drink out of a silver chalice, you immediately think that *you* are a favored guest, and *what the chalice contains* is probably not going to be just water or Coca-Cola.

John, the author of the fourth Gospel, and one of Jesus' 12 disciples, wrote these inspired words about “The Word”: ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** (John 1:1, 14)

In this passage, we might say that the medium of God was the Word of God; yet when John adds ***“the Word became flesh...,”*** the medium is now the flesh. God is saying something both by communicating with us verbally, and then making the message even more meaningful and communicative when Jesus became man. John comments on the message of this medium: ***“full of grace and truth.”***

You may recall the *medium* of God giving the Law at Mount Sinai: it was “morning” (think new beginning); there was “thunder and lightning” (think mysterious heavenly power and potential unexpected death); “thick cloud...” (think no form, and mystery); “a very loud trumpet” (think ram's horn – wildness, war, and Judgment Day). The people concluded that if God continued to speak this way, they would die. (*Ex. 20:19*) Which was true.

So He spoke a new way: as a man, *dwelling with us*. He desires to be in “fellowship” with us and communicated that wonderful message in the incarnation (think humility). Although Jesus did occasionally speak in a loud voice, the incarnation of God is the voice of grace.

When He gave His disciples unleavened bread (think no “puffing up” - sin) in the Last Supper, He was reclining (think ease and friendship and peace). When He gave them the bread He said, “This is My body” (their unleavened bread was very much the texture of flesh, so think life), we begin to connect the mystery of “the Word made flesh.” When He gave them the cup and said, “This is My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sin” (think blood on the door/Passover protection), He was giving His disciples a way to “commune” with Him in an even more intimate way than eating together. They were consuming The Lamb - receiving Him and His righteousness, in the medium of the fleshy bread.

We commune near the end of a service. We sing the “Nunc Dimittis” meaning “now depart” (think ready to journey and ready – if necessary -- to die) – and ready to live again after dying!

Prayer: *Lord, in Your many mediums of coming to us, we think grace. Thank You for communicating that grace in a real way with us in Holy Communion. Amen.*