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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas/Year C  
December 30, 2018  
John 1:1-18

*“How awesome is this!”*

*“How awesome is this!”* I have used this phrase numerous times in my lifetime. There are things that are awesome and things that are AWESOME! Like the first time I visited Denver, Colorado many years ago. I was there to preach a revival and on the second morning of my stay my host family drove me up into the mountains. The higher up we went the more awesome the view. The roadside and grass gradually became snow covered making everything look even more magical. We stopped at some point along the way and even though none of us had on boots, we all got out and took in the glory of mountains and streams. All of it breathtaking and awesome to this city girl.

Oh, and then there was the summer I spent living in New Orleans with the Daughters of Charity. One of the younger sisters and I got up early one Saturday morning and drove almost an hour to the sisters' summer getaway near Biloxi and then to Sunnybank which was a dock known for great fishing and crabbing. And there, with steaming cups of chicory coffee in hand, we watched as the sun rose over the Gulf of Mexico. Water as far as the eye could see glistened as the sun came up and fish jumped up from out of the water like acrobatic performers. That was awesome!

And there among those awesome moments too was seeing my sister's face the moment she first held a small, chocolate skinned, baby girl she named Alanna. And then about two years or so later, a fidgety baby boy she named Aaron. Watching her taking on the role of mom and adopting two precious little ones has been awesome.

Mary held her little one too. A baby boy who the archangel Gabriel said “would be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” She held him close to her breast that Christmas night finding it hard to believe that it was she, of all women, who had been chosen to bear God's Son within her womb. How awesome it must have been to hold Him who was the Savior of the world.

Scripture has recounted for us the many wonderful and awesome acts of God who in God's own time created earth and sky and seas, flung stars and planets in their places, fashioned vegetation and creatures to walk and fly and swim- all of this from nothingness. And who then sculpted from the clay of the earth, Adam and from his rib a partner and co-creator, Eve. And loving the beings He created even when they fell short, there continued to be encounters and relationships, covenants, deliverances, and promises, with the Almighty; the Almighty who was and is for us too magnificent and wonderful and awesome to describe. Our human words fail and cannot adequately describe this God who loves us so since before the beginning. I guess we can say that God, our God, must have thought that we are pretty awesome too!

*In the beginning* so begins John's Gospel. As only John can do in his own poetic way, he gives us yet another Christmas story on this First Sunday after Christmas:

*“In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.  
All things came into being through him,  
and without him not one thing came into being.*

It is interesting to listen to John's account. There is no newborn baby wrapped in bands of cloth nor shepherds or angels. There is no guiding star. Instead, the Word, who is Jesus, simply was. The Word always existed and then came to us in human form and lived among us. In Jesus, God became visible on earth. In Jesus, God's love became truly manifest. In Jesus, God's power was shown working in the world. John says in verse 18: *No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.*

*“In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

And by his presence the Word, Jesus, became the holy and awesome conduit between heaven and earth; between God and humankind. When Nicodemus met Jesus in the dark of night, he was enlightened by Jesus' promise that everyone who believed in him would not perish but instead have eternal life. When the Samaritan woman met him at the well she was shown acceptance and compassion and the promise that she would never be thirsty again. When the paralyzed man missed his opportunity for healing in the pool of Beth-zatha, he was instead made whole

simply by responding by Jesus' command, "*Stand up, take your mat and walk.*" At the end of John's Gospel, John reassures us that there were so many other encounters with the Holy that they could not be written down. That is just how awesome God's manifestation was in the person of Jesus.

During this Christmastide is reminding us that Jesus, the Word made flesh, continues to be God's awesome power and presence in our lives. The Word lives within and among us. Jesus continues to manifest God's awesome power, glory, and presence today and in each tomorrow. His life and work in the world cannot be contained to first century Palestine. For God is in our giving forward, in our hospitality, in our feeding others, in our tutoring children, in our gathering for worship, in the breaking of the Bread and in the drinking of the Cup.

During these twelve days of Christmas and beyond the season, amidst all the business of life that begs our attention, we are reminded and called back to where our center should be and where our hearts belong-celebrating God becoming flesh and God's presence in our lives. That we may show others the awesome love, grace, and mercy of our God. And we are reminded that we are to follow God's Gift to the world, Jesus, so that we can be bearers of the awesome things God is doing here and now. We are to be his vessels full of hope, full of joy, full of life, full of love, full of his light that shines in the darkness.

*"In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.  
All things came into being through him,  
and without him not one thing came into being.*

*...And the Word became flesh and lived among us...*

May the love of God Incarnate in Jesus empower us as God's sons and daughters, to make Him known again and again in this world for only then will the meaning of Christmas last the whole year long.

And oh, how AWESOME is that!

Amen!