Psalm 119:105, John 1:1-5

“Encountering God”

 We continue our Advent journey together. We have seen so far an encounter with our Savior, last week we encountered Emmanuel, and now today we encounter Jesus, our beloved Jesus, who is God. How do you feel when I say Jesus is God? I remember when I was in the St. Augustine Presbytery and a person was being examined on the floor of Presbytery in order to be the Presbyterian Chaplain of the University of Florida and the questioning was not going well. People were starting to wonder what he believed in so I tried to help him out with an easy question and I asked him simply: Do you believe that Jesus is God? Pretty simple and straightforward. He responded by saying: I don’t like to say God, it sounds just too simple and trite.

 Needless to say that answer didn’t help his cause. Today we will find the divinity of our Savior Jesus Christ laid out before us. Being confident in the fact that Jesus is God has to be one of our defining characteristics as Christians. If we are unsure of His divinity, that he is God, then we are probably unsure of so much more.

 Today, I am sorry to say, we will hear fewer stories and much more theology that I hope and pray you will be able to take with you as you leave this sanctuary and apply it to your daily life.

**READ**

 Our second Scripture today is really the Christmas story according to the Gospel of John. There is no Mary, no Joseph, no donkey, no shepherds, no angels, no baby, just Jesus. But even our Savior Jesus is described and called by a name, at the beginning of this Scripture at least, with another term. Jesus is called, very simply, Logos.

 I know many of you are familiar with that term because of the midweek church program with the same name that this church was involved in. A great program, we ran it also in our church in Florida. But Logos has a very specific meaning that not everyone knows.

 When we were in Russia we tried to make our social ministries legal by registering them with the government. We applied to the government to recognize the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy as an organization doing the work that we were doing. The government said no because we don’t represent Moscow. We were told to apply again but this time we were turned down because of the word Protestant denoted a religious organization. We applied a third time and they said just change your name and denied us again.

 So we did change our name and apply again. We had the same exact paperwork except we changed the name from Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy to Logos Place, and in 2 weeks we were registered. There is power in a name. Logos is the Greek word for Word. You may already know that.

 We find in our first Scripture Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet. Now this is Hebrew, but when we consider God’s Word and talk about that, what do we normally think of? Scripture. The Holy Scripture, the Bible, God’s Word is a lamp unto my feet. It shows the way for us when we would follow dark paths it lightens for us the way so we can see clearly as we go forward. Thy Word.

 I don’t think I can stress enough today how important the reading of Scripture is. This is not the central message for today, but it is an important one. You will find in your bulletin, and I’ll include it in my next enews, a link for a sight where you can get a daily email that will take you through reading the Bible in a year. So here in Psalm 119 and elsewhere whenever we speak about God’s Word we mean the Bible.

 During confirmation class they take exams after they finish each section and the first section is entitled the Basics of the Bible. On the test I asked of what use is the Bible for you. So many answered that it is a guide for my life. You see, we believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word and has more authority than any other book ever written in the history of humanity. But it is not God. We do not worship it, we don’t pray to it, or even think it has any type of special power.

 The Word that John talks about in his prologue and specifically in verses 1-5 is something completely different. Look at vs. 1. In the beginning was the Word. Logos is used here and it is supposed to elicit images of Genesis as it also speaks about the beginning of all time and the beginning of all things. I cannot overstate the significance of verse 1. The Word was with God and the Word was God.

 What does God do in Genesis so that there would be light and there would be all the things that God does create? God speaks. Let there be light. Let there be the sun and the moon, let there be plants and animals. By God’s word everything is made and created. So much so that God’s Word is God. But it is even more than that. You have to go to verse 14 go understand who we are talking about here.

 The Word became flesh and lived among us. Who became flesh and lived among us? Jesus. Who is the Word? Jesus. Is it fair to substitute in vs.1 Jesus for anytime that we see the word Word? I think so. Let’s hear how it sounds. In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. Just so we don’t get too far into Trinitarian theology, what this Christmas story tells us is that the baby born in the manger is Jesus, but is God. God became flesh and lived among us.

 As Jesus gives lif and he says I am the life, he raises the dead and says I am the resurrection, he gives bread and says he is the bread of life, he speaks truth and is the truth that sets free, so as he speaks the Word he is the Word. There should be no hesitation in any of us as we confidently say that Jesus is God.

 So what? You know I write all of my sermons by hand and before I put pen to paper I write a one sentence purpose statement and then a one sentence “So What?” statement that is supposed to be what you take home and are able to apply. So what if Jesus is God?

 Well, first of all it means that Jesus is more than a friend. We know him and love him and we go to him with all of our cares and concerns but he is so much more than that. Verse 3 calls him the creator, the one who made us, knows us, and is over every single aspect of our lives. Let’s look at some Scriptures that support our claim to the divinity of Christ. In Romans 9:5 it speaks of our Christ who is over all, God, blessed forever. We find in Hebrews 1:8 that Jesus the Son is to be worshipped and “your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” In II Peter 1:1 Peter speaks and he addresses the Son as “our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

 You know, not long ago Governor Perry got in trouble because he refused to distance himself from the well known Texas Pastor Robert Jefferson when he called Mormonism a cult. Now, I am not going to call any belief system a cult because a cult is by definition any religious system that is not currently in power. As Christians we can get away with calling anything a cult simply because we are in power.

 But Mormonism does not believe that Jesus Christ is God. There is the phrase Lord that is used but a denial of Christ’s divinity and the denial of the Trinity is part of Mormon theology. A person who does not believe Jesus is God is not a bad person at all, there is to be no value judgment laid upon them. But they cannot be understood to be a Christian either.

 The only way to God the Father is through God the Son Jesus Christ as John 14:6 tells us so clearly. We should never be ashamed as Christians to see Jesus as the unique and only light of the World. The Gospel of John makes that very clear. This realization that God came in the flesh to accompany us in our life journey should give us only confidence.

 I am so excited to see what is happening in this church. Every session meeting former members have asked to be reinstated into the rolls of the life of the church. That is exciting to me. That means that sitting next to you today could be the person who was on the other side of whatever issues this church has faced in the past.

 You may be going to church with people who you feel said or did hurtful things to you or to others in the past in this church. The fact that Jesus is God allows, no demands that we put our pride and our selfishness and our hurt aside and focus on God to take us where we need to go into the future with this church. When our focus becomes ourselves then we hold onto the hurt and don’t let God take care of it.

 This church will move ahead whether you choose to be a part of it or not. This church will do all that it can to glorify God and focus on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and our God time after time and Sunday after Sunday. We want all of you to come along and be a part of experiencing God. We can call it the First Presbyterian Experience.

 That is the so what. With God on our side, who can be against us?