

# Sermon For Christmas Day, December 25, 2016 - “If Only I Could Become One Of Them”

Christmas Day Worship  
Sunday, December 25, 2016  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

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## If Only I Could Become One Of Them

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and lived among us.

I've found one of the most powerful images of the Word becoming flesh for me comes from a Christmas story I heard as a child that has stuck with me. I've changed some of the details and now on this Christmas morning, I invite you to settle in and listen to a story. Not so long ago in a town not too far away, they had an autumn with very mild weather. October's warmth slid right on into November and from November into December. It was beautiful, rich and warm. Unusual, but nobody complained or questioned it. They just soaked up as much of it as they could because they knew that winter was surely on its way.

It was cold enough up north that the birds came down, but it wasn't cold enough around town to make them want to move on. The birds were every bit as engaged in soaking up the sun as the human populace. The ducks bobbed around waving their little duck bottoms in the air as they fed; geese bombed around in mobs, settling to feed but for the vigilant few that kept their heads up. It so happened that this lucky weather streak came to an abrupt end on Christmas Eve day as a woman was watching and waiting for her children to arrive from out of town.

It seemed that the winter had been saving up an extra special blow during the deceptively mild weeks previous. It let loose with all its stored fury – cutting wind, slashing rain and snow. As the woman paced the living room, checking the window frequently for signs of her family, she noticed a great number of birds huddled in front of her garage. The building offered a bit of shelter from the wind, but she could see already that there was ice forming on their backs. “Birds are natural, they'll be alright,” she thought and went back to watching anxiously for her family. This went on for some time. She'd check the window, notice the increasing peril of the birds, and watch for some sign of approaching headlights.

After things had gone on in this way, the phone rang. The kids had made it to her sister's house a few hours south; they would spend the night and brave the roads in the morning. It was a relief to know they were safe, and she'd enjoy a peaceful night by the fire. Still, something nagged at the back of her mind. Pretty soon she found herself pacing again, then back at the window to check on the birds. They were huddled together, barely visible for the ice and snow that coated them. Finally the woman decided she had to do something or those birds would freeze to death right in front of her garage. So, she laced up her boots, pulled on her jacket and went out the door.

She planned on opening the door and shooing them in, but as soon as she lifted the door and the birds caught sight of her, they scattered. They were too iced to fly, but they hopped and scrambled and jumped as best they could in all directions. She thought maybe she could circle around behind them and herd them in, but the birds would have none of that. They wouldn't let her get too close and they certainly weren't getting near the garage. The woman began to get frustrated with them. She called them, whispered for them, spoke both tender and harsh words to them. Nothing worked. The birds just stood at a comfortable distance and continued to slowly freeze. The woman went inside for some bread crumbs and cereal, still they wouldn't come.

Her frustration continued to mount until, after a particularly exhausting attempt to chase them into the garage, she sat down in the open door. She listened to the wind howl; she listened to the snow and rain fall. She thought in her frustration, "If only I could become one of them! Then they wouldn't be afraid; then they would listen and hear. If only I could become one of them."

The Word became flesh and lived among us. God became one of us so that we might hear and know and respond to God. God became one of us to save us - to draw us into the warmth of God's love. The word became flesh and lived among us.

This winter may you know God's presence with you - in the cold, in the storms, in the long nights. May you know the warmth of God's love deep within.

Amen.