In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word became flesh and lived among us. Or the Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood as the *Message* translation reads.

Now, I know that John 1 isn’t the Gospel appointed for today. It’s typically a Gospel appointed for Christmas 3, often used if a church has a Christmas Eve and a Christmas Day service. But, this verse, John 1:14, is, in fact, critically important to the Gospel message today. The Word –Wisdom -- God – became flesh and came to live among us so that He “as flesh” could die to give life to the world. When we believe in or welcome or accept this truth, we are eating of the flesh.

As the Early Church Father John Chrysostom said, It is “characteristic of those who greatly love that Christ “brought his body down to our level, namely, that we might be one with Him as the body is joined with the head.”

The Gospel of John, you may remember, was written for insiders – for those who were followers of Jesus. The Gospel was written in an antilanguage or a sort of code that only insiders would understand. Insiders understood that the Gospel isn’t talking about cannibalism but about eating and drinking in the truth of the Word made Flesh. Or said in plain language, the Gospel is talking about being in a one-to-one relationship with Jesus in a way that brings eternal life.

Let’s think for a minute about how to develop that one on one relationship. Developing a relationship with Jesus isn’t all that different from developing a relationship with a mere mortal we admire. Suppose, for example, we were being formed for a new task – let’s say to take over running our parent’s business after they retired or died. Depending on the type of business and how much we know going in, we might have some formal education. Then, our parent would mentor us for the new role. They’d share information with us, and we’d go out and do the work and come back and talk with our parent about our successes and challenges. We’d take every opportunity to soak in the wisdom our parent already has – to get that wisdom and those business instincts to be a part of us, as well. When our parent dies, we regularly remember them and, in that remembrance, continue to take in more and more of their wisdom.

We build a one-to-one relationship with Jesus in a similar way. We study the Bible and listen to sermons where the Bible is explained. Then we go out and do the work of ministering to others. We comfort those who suffer. We try to interact with those we encounter on the road, in the store, or in the workplace in the way Jesus would do. We spend time talking to Jesus about our successes and challenges and listening to Jesus, seeking to learn more about what Jesus wants us to do in each situation. And, we take every opportunity we can to bring the essence of Jesus – the love of God and the Spirit of God – into us.

In our sacramental tradition as Episcopalians, we celebrate the Eucharist at least weekly. Our principal Sunday service, except on rare exceptions, is Eucharist. When we eat or drink at the Holy Table, eternity has broken into time in a unique way. We are participating in the Feast– celebrating that love so strong as to be willing to not only become flesh but to die so that we might have life. We are becoming one with Jesus. Our memorial feast of bread and wine joins us to the living Christ, who is forever and, in that way, we can endure forever.

We can look upon Jesus, observe Jesus, and model our lives after Jesus because of the literal reality of Jesus becoming flesh. We learn about how Jesus lived in the flesh through our Bible. We continue to develop a relationship with Jesus through talking with Jesus and listening to Jesus. And we become commingled with Jesus when we participate in the Eucharistic Feast. The Feast nourishes us to continue to live as Jesus did. It also enables us to endure forever as the Spirit of God endures forever.

God became flesh and lived among us to provide an example for us to see and follow and so that He – as flesh -- could give his life for us. But Jesus isn’t only a gifted mentor or compassionate healer. He is our Bread. We are to feed on that Bread. We feed on that Bread by modeling our life after how Jesus lived, through prayer, and the Eucharist. Because we feed on that Bread, we, like the Spirit of God, live forever.