I'd like to turn your attention to our last reading - the opening to John's gospel. And it's been said that the other gospels - Matthew, Mark, and Luke - tell the story of Jesus from the ground up - so you get the accounts of Mary and Joseph, and Jesus' birth and childhood. But John does something different. He gives us an account of Christ from the top down, as he pulls back the curtain on Jesus' eternal and divine origins.

Look again at v1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

And it's hard not to be drawn in by the beauty of the poetry, is it? But it's not just the poetry. It's that it chimes with something deep inside you. Like a harpist gently plucking the strings, this opening to John's gospel plays on some of our deepest desires.

Think of the way John describes Jesus as **the Word**, the *logos*. And in John's day, *logos* was a philosophically loaded term. It represented the underlying order of the universe, *the* unifying principle. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus put it, "all is flux" - everything is changing, nothing stands still, and maybe you know what that feels like. But the logos keeps everything ordered.

But logos could also mean *reason*, *wisdom,* your ability to *understand* the changing cosmos.

Well, that was how you read it if you were Greek. But if you were Jewish, steeped in the Old Testament, you'd also have a view about the logos, because it was how God *created* the cosmos - by speaking: 'Let there be… and there was.' And it was how he communicated to his people, through his prophets.

But what if you were combine all those? Because that is what John is doing here. Then you have *that* which holds everything together, *and* that which is wisdom itself, *and* God speaking and creating, and speaking to you. In other words, you'd have *the* Word, *the* logos.

Now, whether you were a greek philosopher or a Jewish believer, you could say, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.' You might even say, 'the Word *was* God.' But what you could never say was what John goes on to say 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'

In the 1993 film *Shadowlands*, Anthony Hopkins plays the Oxford professor, CS Lewis, and during a tutorial on the nature of literature, Lewis says to a new undergraduate, "We read to know that we are not alone."

Isn't that why this passage speaks to us? It's why Christmas speaks every year. Because they tell us, we're not alone. That in the chaos of life, and in our longing for meaning, in our desire to connect with that which is above and beyond us, there is a God who brings order, and makes sense, and speaks. But not at a distance. Instead, he comes and is born, and dwells among us… to be known by us.

But then look at v3: 'All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' So, if the Old Testament tells us, God created through his word, John is telling us that Word is not an abstract power. It's a person. It's Christ. So this Christmas, if you see any artwork depicting Jesus, as a baby in a manger, the artist is attempting the impossible, aren't they?

Because how can you convey with paint and brush the Creator humbling himself to enter his creation? But that's what Christmas is, John says.

Ok, but if Lewis said, 'We read to know that we are not alone,' Proust said, "Every reader finds himself." Now, you could quibble with that, but John Calvin, the great reformer, would agree - at least a bit. Because right at the start of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he says, you cannot know yourself until you know God. You cannot find yourself, until you find God. Why? Because you've been made in his image… but we've also fallen far from that image.

So what if you were to see your Creator, the One in whose image you were made, humbling himself, and being born in a stable, coming down to your level? And what if that opens up the possibility for you to begin to truly know him and so truly know yourself?

You see, this passage doesn't just tell you 'you're not alone', it also tells you, 'you have a Maker', which means you have a purpose. There's a reason for you being. And it's to be found in the One born in a stable.

But then look at v4, 'In him was life.' We're all looking for life, aren't we? I mean, we're not all looking for it in the same places, but you're looking for something to fill you, to complete you, to give you that sense of being truly alive. And it might be in sport, or stuff, in people or profession.

But John is saying that ultimately, that longing for life is a longing for Christ.

So, finally, look again at what he writes in v4-5, 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' Now if an alien were to visit Lausanne right about now, what would he think everyone was celebrating? Would he see the lights hanging across the streets, or wrapped around trees, or illuminating shop windows, and go, 'this has got to be about light'? I mean, even if he saw a picture of Jesus, as a baby, in a manger, with light glowing around him, he'd be forgiven for thinking Christmas was a festival of light, wouldn't he?

And he would not be wrong. Because John is saying that at the very first Christmas, the Light of all lights has entered our world. Our dark world.

Aren't there days when you feel that darkness? The darkness of injustice and violence, or racism and religious self-righteousness.

The problem is that while we all suffer *under* the darkness, we're all also responsible, in one way or another, *for* the darkness. Which means, we can never be the source of our own light. Instead John says, whether you're living in the shadow of grief, or just need some direction on your path; whether your heart feels dark from bad choices you've made, or heaven seems dark and God seems absent, light, *The Light*, has come. Did he glow in the manger, like a baby who'd drunk radioactive milk? No. But he *has* entered our darkness. And every light on every street is pointing you to him.

So, John's opening, and Christmas every year, tells you that what you most want - order in all the chaos, and purpose in your life; life that's abundant and light in the dark, has come. Because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.