

Sermon: The Conversation in God**Scripture: John 1****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: January 4, 2026**

In her book, *Church of the Wild*, pastor Victoria Loorz argues that the word “word” in this most famous of passages in the Gospel of John is a mistranslation. Up until the 4th century, she explains “logos” the Greek word for “word” was rendered with the latin word “sermo” which means conversation, not *verbum* which means “word”. The fullness of the greek word that John used, logos, is better understood as conversation not word. “In the beginning was the conversation and the conversation was with God and the conversation was God.” Loorz suggests that the original Greek word logos is closer “to what biologists are revealing about the way trees talk to one another and what quantum scientists have discovered at the center of molecules, not things but relationships.”¹

This is the Gospel of John’s origin story, so unlike Matthew’s and Luke’s birth narratives, that mystically Jesus Christ was born in flesh but it was an enfleshment of the conversation going on within God and that has been going on in God eternally. Maybe we could say, not to get too literal about it, but that God got tired of talking to God’s self and turned the conversation outward and there burst forth creation in the first incarnation and Jesus as the human component of the conversation of God to engage us more fully because well, we needed that, somehow, because within us among all creation the conversation broke down.

¹ Church of the Wild, Victoria Loorz

The conversation between Divinity and humanity. It's been going on since the beginning, it didn't start with the incarnation of Jesus obviously, there's always been a mystical element to being human, some sense of our capacity to be creators ourselves, some sense that there's something beyond our 5 senses, and some sense that as final as death seems to be humans have always known it's more a transition than it is a closing of the story.

Maybe that's wishful thinking. Maybe, but maybe not.

So from the beginning the wondering and the conversation was going on between God and creation and between God and the human being. And then at a point in time the conversation began to get specific and focused between God and a people, the Jewish people, the ones who understood themselves to be chosen to take the conversion to the next level and translate the conversation with God into how to live in the world.

Sometimes the conversation was sweet and beautiful and sometimes there were arguments and screaming between the parties, but the conversation went on as God sought to convince the Jews of the right or righteous way for human being to live - for instance, that they didn't need to sacrifice children or virgins to appease a wrathful god. That needn't be a part of the conversation. And "No King" was what God tried to convince them, that they didn't need a King, for they had God. But the Jews weren't convinced on that account and said they wanted a King like other nations had, and God said - right there and then, it's in black and white in the Hebrew scriptures - God said, "that's a bad idea to have a King, they'll take all the wealth for themselves and conscript your children into service for them and they'll send you to war and it won't be pretty." God said "No King" and the Jews said "c'mon God, we're gonna get slaughtered here if we

don't have a ruler" and God was like "geez, don't listen to me and let's see how it goes." They didn't listen and it didn't go well.

But God hung with them in the conversation nonetheless, chose special Jewish people as his conversation partners on behalf of the Jews. They were called prophets and they continued to try and clarify what God was talking about in the conversation and how God really knew what he was talking about and won't you pleeeeease listen. For instance, Israel, don't mistreat the foreigner or the orphan or the widow, the true value and worth of a nation is how they treat the most vulnerable among them. And they didn't listen great to that either, but then they would and then they wouldn't and they recorded it all in the sacred scriptures, amazingly they were pretty honest about it all, how they weren't great conversation partners for God and were not being the light to the nations that they were chosen to be.

So it was said among them and in the conversation that there would come one eventually, who knows when, but at some point there would come one who would take the conversation to a whole new level, which was obviously needed. And in the fullness of time there was born the Messiah. We say. Jews say that he still hasn't come. We Christians say he's come. They say "well, where is the fulfillment of all things that the Messiah promises, then?" And we say "we're at an in-between time, the Messiah has come and spoken a definitive word into the conversation but the conversation has not ended, we're still needed to get the conversation right. And God's really patient with us."

So Jesus comes, the enfleshment of the conversation, the Messiah, and of course because it's a conversation Jesus doesn't come to dominate us, control us, determine us, but to make a really good argument for what

God's been saying all along and he makes that argument in his teachings and healings and especially in his death, exemplifying in his life how we are supposed to live in ways of self-donation rather than self-acquisition and in certain ways we've gotten it and in other ways we've still failed to get it.

The conversation has been going on from the beginning. When you and I were born, we entered into the conversation that was already going on with God and humanity. We were born into a world where God had made a provocative case for God's love for the world through Jesus Christ and you and I, each of us, all of us together in the church and beyond as we come into life and grow through our lives are a part of the conversation and must decide what we do with the conversation. How do we respond to this radical statement that God has made in the world through Jesus Christ? Do we let it touch our lives, mold our lives, direct our lives? How are we participants in the conversation? Are we easily distracted from the conversation? Do we not fully buy what God is trying to convince us of in the conversation? Do we believe that our meager lives can be enough to contribute to the conversation? Are we tending the most vulnerable among us? Are we allowing Kings to send us to war? Are we allowing greed to run rampant?

When we come to the communion table this morning and each time we come here every first Sunday of the month, part of what we are doing is remembering the conversation that we have become deaf to somehow, the conversion that God patiently continues to invite us into. When we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine representing Jesus' life's blood and his body we are saying tell me again God what you mean - "this is my body given for you" and tell me again God why it matters - "this is my blood shed

for you for the forgiveness." Tell me again God who we are whose we are - "I chose you to go and bear fruit in my name".

And we agree again to continue the conversation with honesty, because without being committed to truth and honesty in the ongoing conversation things very quickly run aground and stall in the relationship, in the conversation. We know this. If there is one thing that ruins relationships, especially our most intimate ones it is secrets and dishonesties, and deceptions. And it sure feels like we are experiencing that in spades right now with this administration and with social media and AI, we literally cannot believe our eyes any more. It's a very very scary world of deception and dishonesty, which is what our scriptures call Satan, remember, The Father of Lies.

And so that's maybe the most important thing that we have to work on in our conversation with God in this new year, is our own honesty, our honesty about ourselves, how easily we can deceive and be deceived, and then maybe the conversation can lead to something real and lasting in this effort to make it on earth as it is in heaven... but not until then.

This is a table of honest love.

I am giving myself, my life, to you and I ask that you give to others.

It's that simple and honest.

Let's not make it more complicated than that in Jesus' name, amen.