

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

The Nativity of our Lord (Christmas Day 2021)

The Word Became Flesh

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-2, 14, ESV)

The Word, who is this? What does it mean? How was the Word with God in the beginning? These questions and many others like them are asked by people everywhere. But for those who believe in the Triune God, the mystery is not so perplexing. Scripture clearly teaches that God is three Persons in one essence. At Creation God said, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” (Genesis 1:26, ESV)* and at His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to evangelize and baptize in the name of the Triune God, saying, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19, ESV)* Thus, at Creation God uses the first person plural pronoun to define Himself as more than One Person and at our Lord’s ascension into heaven He specifically names the three Persons of the Trinity.

Thus, striving to understand the apostle John’s opening sentence of his gospel, we lay aside our unbelief and cling to the word of holy Scripture for understanding wherein we find in the book of Proverbs, God, opening our eyes and hearts to the blessings of understanding who the Word is. In Proverbs God says, *“The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.” (Proverbs 8:22–31, ESV)* Thus, from before Creation the Word was with God. In God there is a perfect coincidence between the Word and His being, between the Word and His thought, between the Word and His act. The Word is the perfect and complete revelation of God of whom St. John writes, *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (v. 14)*

The God of Creation comes to His Creation and becomes flesh. St. John and his fellow disciples were privileged to behold the divine glory, glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, in the Incarnate Logos (Word). He dwelt among them in His human nature, these men were privileged to see the Word of Life, to hear Him with their ears, and to touch Him with their hands. They were eyewitnesses that the human nature of Christ was permeated by the divine. What an un-matchless gift, to walk, talk, eat, and touch the divine Logos, the Word who has been with God from the beginning.

This revealing truth is confessed by all who have been given the gift of faith to believe in the Son of God and His atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. Christians everywhere confess their faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, saying, *“I believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.”*

This Jesus whom we worship is the omniscient Designer who designed the universe, who balances the sphere of heaven, who *“marked off the heavens with a span,”* and *“enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure”* *Isaiah 40:12 ESV*). He is the omnipotent Creator, the earth is His handiwork, He made all things, and all that exists from the tropical equator to the icy poles are His Creation. He sent the first ray of light into the abyss, shattering the darkness. He set the sun and the moon in the heavens. He made the smallest cell illuminated by the eye of the microscope and the largest star scanned by the telescope. He has control and unlimited power over every sector of life, regulating the beat of the wings of the hummingbird while giving skill to the spider to spin his web across palace windows. St. Paul confesses this truth in his letter to the church of Colossae, saying; *“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him”* *(Col. 1:16 ESV)*.

The Word came to be one with us, to identify Himself with us, to live with us, and to die with us so that He might redeem us unto Himself for all eternity. When you reflect on the gifts you received for Christmas, don't forget the greatest gift of all, the Word, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As I said earlier, the apostles were blessed to be a part of His ministry as He walked throughout Syria, Galilee, and Judea healing the sick, raising the dead, and proclaiming the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in His name. They witnessed His crucifixion, His burial, His resurrection, and His ascension into heaven and then began their ministries to proclaim life and salvation in His name. So we consider them to be highly privileged to be so chosen. But you and I are just as privileged because like them, we too have been chosen.

Many envy the apostles for their closeness to Christ, but you and I are no less close. The apostles received our Lord's teachings from His lips, we receive it through His inspired and inerrant word of Holy Scripture, that word which the Holy Spirit led the evangelists to write. It is Christ speaking to us through His Scriptures. We consider the apostles to be privileged having sat at meal with our Lord. But we are no less privileged for we sit at a meal served by Christ as He feeds us the richest of food and drink, His body, and His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Furthermore, we consider the apostles privileged for they communed with the Kingdom of God, but you, too, are just as privileged for you have been born again, baptized with water and the Spirit having been made residents of the Kingdom of God through adoption as sons and daughters. Thus, there is no reason to envy the apostles, you have all they had, and your eternal future is as secure as theirs, a future residing with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in their divine and heavenly home. What a marvelous Christmas present we have received from God as He gave us His Son, the Word become flesh, to live and die for our sake, for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore, we gather this morning in thanksgiving for the gift of God's Son, saying with St. Paul, *“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”* *(2 Corinthians 9:15, ESV)* But of course, our thanks are paltry compared to the Gift God gave us.

What can we give to God in exchange for such an unspeakable Gift? The very least a child can do when presented with the loving gifts of parents is to gratefully receive and thankfully enjoy them. The tragedy of Christmas consists in this, that God has given to sinful man the unspeakable gift of His Son Jesus Christ, that through Him they might have forgiveness, eternal life, happiness, comfort, peace, victory, and hope. Yet, in callous indifference men reject the Gift, in unbelief they scorn it, or in self-righteousness they offer to God their own works as a suitable substitute for the merit of God's dear Son. This is base ingratitude! It is sinful audacity! It is soul-killing pride! Let us not be like any of these of whom St. John complains, saying, "***He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.***" (John 1:11, *ESV*)

In gratitude of a Spirit-filled soul let us give to Christ our heart that He may cleanse it from all sin by His blood, that He may fill it with joy and hope, believing that He will make known to us the unsearchable riches of His grace, while keeping it calm in the face of trouble and calamity, strengthening us that we may face the things still coming upon this distorted and war-torn world.

Even more, our gratitude should induce us to do more than just take and enjoy God's unspeakable Gift. If during these Christmas celebrations we have not heard in vain the bells chime, the organ peal, the choirs sing, the children humming Christmas carols, and the pastor proclaiming: "Christ, the Savior is born," then we will in love and gratitude seek to cast off the old man, setting aside his disagreeableness, his unkindness, his love of sin, and his hatred, while putting on the new man, one who walks in joy, service, loving obedience, patience, and hope, for the sake of God's unspeakable Gift to the world, Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.