

Sermon – John 1.1-14 (Christmas Day – 2021)

We have spent the Advent season in subdued preparation and anticipation for the coming of the Son of God in human flesh. We have heard the words of John the baptizer, who said, “Make straight the way of the Lord.” We have heard of the pre-incarnate Christ’s activity in the Old Testament, particularly as the Angel of the Lord, which displayed His grace towards His people, and gave us a glimpse of what He would accomplish when He would eventually become flesh. We have considered the comings of Christ on the Last Day, and His coming each and every day into our hearts through the means of grace. But behold, today, we celebrate the day that Christ comes as a child in the manger. The angels are singing their praise to the glory of God. The shepherds go and see the wonder of God’s love. The Son of God is born in human flesh. This is Christmas. We celebrate the miracle of the incarnation. God became human for our sakes, so that we, through Him, would be reconciled to God. God’s salvation and deliverer has come to save us. In this great festival day of the Church, we praise God for the Savior’s birth into the world. With wonder and joy, we sing the festival hymn: Hymn number 142, Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn. Please rise.

The Holy Gospel – John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

⁹ That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

The Word Became Flesh

Dear loved ones of God for whom the Word became flesh,

Jesus comes that we can be called, "Children of God!" And only those who believe in Jesus have that joy and pleasure, to be called such. As John writes, "**as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.**"

But aren't all people children of God? God did create us all, but not all have the right to call God Father. The world likes to think so, though. They like to imagine God to be some kind father that has no boundaries for his children, that is cool with whatever wicked or perverse thing the children want to do. And they imagine that this is a description of a *loving* father. That is really a worthless father, and certainly not the kind of father that our God is. God is a righteous God. He created us in His image, that is, in perfect righteousness, and He expects His children to live in that righteousness, because this righteousness is good and holy. Falling short of that righteousness, we are not good, we are separated from God, lose the status as His beloved children and are instead children of His wrath.

At first everything was good. Everything was perfect. Creation was perfect, and God's special creation, man, was good and perfect. Adam and Eve were good. They received from God, by His grace original righteousness. By the perfect work of God, they lived righteously, perfectly and holy. They knew God and they loved Him, They knew the Law perfectly which was written on their hearts, and they delighted in the Law of God. They feared, loved and trusted God above all things. In Him, they found their contentment, their pleasure, their joy in life. And Adam and Eve also had the perfect marriage, loving and serving the other perfectly.

They were exactly as God created them and intended them to be! And as such they had perfect peace and union and communion with God.

But at the fall, they stopped being who God created them to be. They became sinful. The original righteousness that they were given by God in creation was lost. Though God still creates and forms us through procreation, that righteousness is lost, and now we have original sin that has been passed down as a hereditary spiritual disease that is eternally deadly. To use a word of our text, we are born in darkness. Spiritual darkness, where we are by nature unable to know God and much less love Him, nor are we capable of loving our neighbor with the perfect love God demands. It is in spiritual darkness where sin rules, where selfishness, pride, lust, and covetousness rule in the heart.

Because of this fallen state of man, into which we all have been born, the relationship with God is ruined completely. Man has become God's enemies, rather than His dear children.

Man, by nature, belongs to the darkness rather than the Light. Man is in death rather than in life. This is not how God intends us to be.

So God the Father sent the Word to restore fallen man to Himself. The Word is the eternal, uncreated Son of God. John in this text is clearly making a reference to creation. At creation, He existed. He was already there. He is eternal God. Through Him the Father created all things out of nothing.

And so the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God was in the flesh, that itself is a wonder, but how should we receive this news that He dwells among us. This is the righteous God, and we are worthy of His wrath. Shouldn't this terrify us? It's bad enough to drive past a speed trap going 10 mph over the speed limit. That will get your heart rate up. But if God is with us, will He see our every misdeed, our every selfish action, and every good work left undone?

But Jesus said, **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”** (Jn 3:17).

The Word that created light in the darkness on the first day of creation, comes to bring light to man's darkness of sin. The Word who created Life out of nothing comes to bring spiritual life to a people in spiritual death. The Word who created children of God out of the dirt of the ground, shall create children of God out of these dead bones and stone hearts of ours.

So the Word becomes flesh and dwelt among us. He enters into the world, to restore us to how God intended us to be. He comes to restore righteousness. He comes to restore us to God, to bring us back to Him as His dear children.

And that is what we celebrate this Christmas! The Word is conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. The baby in the manger in Bethlehem, is 100% everlasting God, the Son of the Father, the Alpha and Omega, with no beginning and no end. He is also 100% true man, every bit as human as we, with a human mind, human soul, human body, human weaknesses, a human, yet without sin. He is therefore, the One Mediator between God and man to draw us to Him. He is born to live that righteous life God intends us to live. He is born to suffer and die for our sins, so that the blood spilt from His veins is the holy and precious blood of God Himself, the sufficient sacrifice to cover all our sins!

Dear sinners, Jesus makes Himself your forgiveness, your righteousness, your light and your Life.

Through faith in Him, Jesus is yours! In Him, you are as God intended you to be, though it is not your righteousness, but Christ's! Through your faith in Christ as your Savior, God considers you forgiven all of your sins, righteous in His sight, perfect, holy, His dear children! You are restored to God, you have communion and union with Him! All is well!

This is the external righteousness of Christ that is ours, that is credited to us, and this is the righteousness that saves. But the Word also recreates us within through His Word and Sacraments, each day causing us to conform to that righteousness lost in the Garden of Eden. Paul states, "**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**" (2 Co 5:17). Our will is changed, we are no longer ruled by sin, but we are ruled by Christ, our Lord. We hate sin, and we love the good and holy will of God. We love His Law. We begin to fear, love and trust in Him above all things and to find all our hope, contentment and joy in Him. And also we begin to selflessly love and serve our neighbors. This is our desire as a new creation in Christ Jesus!

Though this is not perfected in this life, because of the sinful flesh still clings to us. Paul admits this in his letter to the Philippians 3:12, when he says, "**Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**" Christ has taken hold for us righteousness for salvation, and so we took press on to take hold of righteousness as well, to live godly lives in praise and glory to God and for the good of our neighbor.

Christ is our Life, our Light and our Salvation. And He continues to come to us today in Word and Sacrament, to shine on us, and to continue to claim us as God's dear children. And how much we continue to need Him regularly, because we still know that we are sinners in need of the righteousness and forgiveness of Christ. We have not yet been perfected, nor shall we be perfected until either we leave this world, or Christ returns.

And so in repentance, we continue to look for His perfection and forgiveness that saves us. He shines on us with His saving Word of Life. We come to the altar with hearts of faith receiving for our salvation, the body and blood of the eternal Word made flesh, which hung on the cross and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and continues to dwell among us today in His Gospel!

So rejoice believers, this Christmas Day. Mary's Son, born in Bethlehem, is also God's Son, who came bring you back to life and light in God, so that in Him, we might again have the right to be called children of God. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.