

## ***“The Word made flesh”***

Who is this God that stirs up the world to rejoice in His birth this day? Well, if you listen to St. Luke and that Scripture reading that we associate with the Birth of Jesus – then you get a wonderful picture of the Birth of the Savior. His humble birth to humble parents. His humble birth announced to humble shepherds.

It is the picture we associate with Christmas – and it lends itself to what I call our “Hallmark” view of the Birth of the Christ. On Christmas Eve – it’s Luke 2 – with our children dressed as Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds and sheep.

On Christmas Day it’s John 1. Have you ever seen a Children’s Christmas Service based on this text? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory ...” What costumes would the children wear for that?

St. John’s Gospel is unique in many ways – but one of them is that it was the last Gospel to be written. In other words, John had the luxury to write differently than the others – because God’s people would already have Matthew, Mark and Luke’s Gospels in hand. And so, with that foundation, John’s writing is ..... well ..... unique.

His revelation of the Birth of the Savior is really found in half a verse – “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...” You know how that goes – you’ve heard the children at the Christmas Eve service. The scene is set with Luke 2 – so now we can dive into other, glorious aspects, of the birth of our Savior.

St. John goes from “in the beginning” to Christmas (and really, through His death and resurrection to His ascension). Actually, before “the beginning,” before creation – there is God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, this One born of Mary – was already there in the beginning.

And more than that – everything was created through “the Word” – which is John’s name for the Son of God, Jesus. Jesus who created all things – now, becomes part of His creation – conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb, and born of the Virgin Mary. The twelve days of Christmas are not long enough to ponder that marvelous truth.

He who is true God and created all things, becomes true man. This God-man, Jesus Christ, dwells with us – He dwells in the midst of His creation. That is a profound mystery. How can the One who is eternal, and omnipresent – come into time, and locate Himself in human flesh? And WHY would He do such a thing?

Who is this God? Well, it's not the God that the Deists confess. They believe that God is like a clockmaker who crafts the timepiece – winds it up – and then leaves it to itself. That's not the God of the Bible – for He who creates all things – “still takes care of it” (to use the language of the Catechism).

Such is the love of God for you. He gives you life – sustains and takes care of your life – and even when His beloved ones rebel – He redeems their lives. God “buys you back” – through the holy, precious blood of Jesus Christ, His Son.

Mankind (male and female) is the pinnacle of His creation. When Adam and Eve set Him aside, and His Word – for their own desires and wishes – He doesn't set them aside. He doesn't crumple up His creation and throw it away, now that it's broken. He doesn't rain fire and brimstone, or deluge it with a flood to destroy it. No, He sends His Son.

The Son of God takes on human flesh to redeem mankind. In this Babe born in Bethlehem – we see the true character of God – His love, His grace, His patience, His desire to save because of His desire that we might live. In Jesus we see His intimate, present and enduring sustaining of His creation.

Jesus was “in the beginning,” with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is the Word through which all things were created – through whom all life is given.

“The reason for the season” – the reason there is a Christmas – is so that you may have life. The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us – so that He might take your place. He takes the sin of the whole world and becomes sin – so that in His flesh, He might pay the ransom price for all mankind – bound in sin and death.

Jesus is born so that He might live for you, and die for you. He is laid in the wooden manger so that He might be laid upon the wooden cross – the once and for all sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world.

He doesn't do this for those who prove their love for God – who work hard to make up for their transgressions. "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him." And yet He comes – He is born, and dies – so that sinners might live.

Christmas is not about giving gifts to God – but God giving gifts to you. "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name" – to all who hear His promises of forgiveness, life and salvation, and believe – "He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but [born] of God."

God who created your life is the One who creates faith by means of His Gospel promise – by means of His Savior-Son, Jesus Christ. This is the gift of God – that you become His beloved children – cherished, redeemed, and sustained.

This is His glory – that He should want to have anything to do with us – that He goes out of His way for our benefit – that He sacrifices it all, for undeserving ones who have thrown it all away. This is His glory, "glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

You see His glory, and receive His glory – as this very day He announces His love for you, taking away all your sin. He gives His Body and Blood – born of Mary and crucified on Calvary – to you, so that you may have life – life with God – life everlasting.

That is why we sing with the angels of the glory of God in the highest – for in Jesus – He gives us peace on earth. Peace be with you, as you receive His Christmas gift – even Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds – and sustains your life – in Christ Jesus. Amen.