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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 27, 2015
Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 63:7-9, 1 John 1:1-4
Hymns: 708; 99; 76; 106:4,7 (105:1,2,8)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 1:1-14

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

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. ⁹That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who

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. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Word as a Name of God:

This text before us this morning is probably one of the most memorized passages in the Bible. It is recognized for its poetic beauty, and its marvelous truth. It is often read as one of our Christmas reading. It is so rich and full of truth that it is hard to grasp it all. It speaks to us of the mystery and marvel of our salvation that is in Jesus' incarnation and birth. The greatest marvel is expressed in simple words that any could understand, but these simple words express a truth that is beyond our comprehension. --

THEME: In Jesus' Birth the Word Became Flesh

What is this about? What is meant by the Word? This is –

I. The Eternal Word by Whom All things Were Made.

The first truth that is presented in our text helps us understand what makes Jesus' birth is so exceptional. The

opening words of our text make it clear that “the Word” is not simply alluding to only the revelation of God that is found in the inspired writings of Holy Scripture.

John 1:1-3 “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.”

“The Word” is the express representation of the eternal Son of God. He is eternal; when all things began He already was. He was since before time began. That “The Word was with God” expresses the unity of the Godhead. “The Word was God” expresses the true divinity of this Person who was present with God the Father and the Holy Spirit since before the world began.

We are so used to this article of faith that we almost take it for granted, not that it isn’t special or a great wonder, but what we take for granted is that anyone and everyone that confesses that they believe in Jesus also believes this. Without doubt, all must believe this if they truly believe in Jesus as God and Savior. Apart from this truth one does NOT have saving faith.

Tragically, there are many who find this teaching of the divine nature of the Word, and so the divine nature of Jesus objectionable. Some teach that Jesus was simply a part of the creation, that the Son was a status that was achieved by an angel who was particularly faithful to God. What do the Scriptures teach us in the words of our text? Something very different from that. **“The Word was God!”**

More than that, the Word is the creating power in the beginning. Nothing was made without the Word. Genesis expresses this in the record of God's creation with the simple teaching that God said, "Let there be" and it was. Time and again the power of the Word brought portions of the creation into being. That is the way it was done from the first moments of the creation until the end of creation six days later. Nothing was made apart from the Word, who is and was and ever shall be the eternal Son of God. So we confess in the Nicene Creed: "Being of one substance with the Father; **by whom all things were made.**" That is in the second article of the Nicene Creed. We need to take careful note of the punctuation. It is talking about Jesus making all things, not the Father's involvement in the same.

And so it was that God sent the Word, the revelation of God's power and grace into the world. The Babe of Bethlehem is --

II. The Word that Brings Light to a Dark World.

It's hard for mankind to admit that we are living in darkness. Until one sees the light one doesn't realize that the darkness is even there. Death and darkness go hand in hand, and so Jesus who is life also brings light.

John 1:4-5 "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

For those who were dwelling in darkness their eyes were closed to the light. And the darkness was even more tragic. God loved the world and desired to bring the world the light of life by "**sending His own Son in the**

likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The world closed their eyes to the light of life that was right before them. Even the Lord’s own people, for whom Jesus had a special affection, refused to receive Him as Lord and Savior, as God in the flesh. And so darkness reigns in the hearts of so many in this world. It is just as Paul wrote in Romans 1:

Romans 1:21 “Although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

What we celebrate this Christmas season is this Light that has come into the world. This light has shone in our hearts. We have been blessed that God has dispelled the darkness of sin and let the shine in our hearts, and we have life in His name. This is where we see the greatest wonder of God’s glory revealed. And it is revealed in the incarnation of the Son of God, in the Word being made flesh.

You see, it is --

III. The Word that Reveals God’s Glory in His Grace and Truth.

John 1:14 ^{“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.”

John speaks of a great mystery here. The Word the almighty Word which is the Eternal Son became flesh, He became one of us and lived among us on this earth. He lived life like we do. He worked, and He was tired. He experienced sadness and frustration, and grief and

pain. In all these things He also endured temptation, even as we do, yet He lived without sin. In Word made flesh the legal requirement of the law was fulfilled.

The legal requirement of the law also led Him to the cross where Jesus bore the curse of the law in our place. God directed that all this should come to pass for us and for our salvation. That is the truth and grace that reveals God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now let's step back and consider this once again just as John wrote it for us

John1:10-13 “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.”

He was in the world that He had made. The Son of God became part of His creation, not for fun and games, but to be their Savior. He became their Savior, and even His own people would not have Him. But this is the grace, the truth, the light that has shined in our hearts so that we have received Him. We didn't receive Him because we were smarter, or less resistant to the truth, or simply decided that this was the right thing to do. It wouldn't have happened that way. It couldn't have happened that way. It happened because this was the will of God for you, even your sanctification, that you should be drawn out from the sin of this world, and made God's own.

Because of this act of grace which God performed in your heart and life, you have been given the right to become children of God! This is the will of God for you. And it all happened in connection with the Word becoming flesh. It just couldn't have happened any other way. So the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 3:16 “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”

The mystery of godliness, how it is that we have become godly, it starts with the wonder, the great mystery in itself of God being manifest in the flesh. He suffered for our sins and satisfied divine judgment so that justification reigned in all the world through Him. He was received up into glory as true God and true man! For all eternity He remains incarnate, our flesh and blood brother, so that we might have faith in His name, and know Jesus as our intercessor before the throne of God.

So it is that this Christmas we sing Glory to God in the Highest along with the angel host, because **“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”** (v.14).

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.