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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
December 25, 2018  
Christmas Day

Scripture Lessons: 1 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 1:18-25  
Hymns: 92; 76; 89:1,5; 98; 97

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

Sermon Text: John 1:14

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, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: In the beginning was the Word!

Throughout our midweek advent services we have been meditating on the wonder of this divine entity which the Spirit has presented to us as the Word of God. We started with meditating upon the facts of this Word being not only present at the creation of the world but being the very mechanism for the creation of all things. God said and it came into being. Without Him, that is without the Word, nothing was made that was made. However, even that was not the greatest truth of that meditation. The greatest truth in that first meditation was found in the fact that the Word was life! The mystery of life finds its source in the Word of God; that is all life. Apart from the Word there is

no life, NO life, not physical, (neither animal nor human,) not spiritual for any of mankind, and most certainly there is no eternal life apart from the Word of God! The Word is Life!

We then moved on to the quandary of light versus darkness. The fact is the darkness that is in the world is intense darkness, total darkness, and of course it is spiritual darkness. There is a great deal of denial about this darkness that has come because of the sin that darkens the heart of man, but that makes it no less dark. The Word is light that brings light to all men. The Word alone brings Light to the sin darkened soul!

We were then presented with the Word being grace. A contrast was presented by the Spirit between the lessons of the law and the lessons which the Word brings to the hearts of men. **The Word is Grace** in that with the Word the kindness and love of God appears. We do not earn the grace of God or the salvation of God, because grace would then no longer be grace! The free gift of God is eternal life. The Word is Grace!

All this truth for us to meditate upon, to ponder in our hearts as Mary did as she had the wonders of Christmas presented before her in the birth of her Son, Jesus. And so we reach the pinnacle of the mystery in this our Christmas devotion:

## **THEME: The Word Becomes Flesh!**

### **I. The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us.**

This first point needs some pondering, some prayerful meditation. The opening of our epistle lesson is so true, *“without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh!”* (1 Timothy 3:16) We have all read and heard, and even memorized the account of Jesus’ birth, but we cannot fathom the truth of what actually happened. There is this Christmas carol that I appreciate called “Mary did you know?” It ends with the

thought that is before us, Did Mary know that the Baby she held in her arms was the great "I AM?" Yes! She did! I believe that for both Mary and Joseph the Holy Spirit had instilled that knowledge in their hearts and minds that the little Baby that Mary and Joseph cared for was the great "I AM!" But that doesn't mean that they were any more capable of grasping the wonder of that truth than we are.

The Holy Spirit instills this truth into our hearts also. The truth is that God the Son took upon Himself our human nature. We confess in the Athanasian Creed that Jesus is *"one Christ, One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God."*

So the Word became flesh; He became our Brother, and though He was also always almighty God, He humbled Himself. He lived as a helpless infant dependent upon His mother's care and nursing. He lived as a Child who needed to learn His Bible lessons, who although true God submitted to Joseph and Mary and their parental authority. He lived this life as we do, no shortcuts: He worked, He struggled with daily necessities; got hungry, thirsty, tired. He was tempted, really tempted in all points like we are, yet He did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15) In this willing humiliation that actually goes a step beyond the actual incarnation, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. (Psalm 8:5)

All this for us, that He might be our substitute both in fulfilling the law of God and in taking upon Himself the curse of the law. And so He would secure our righteousness.

To secure our salvation He had to be more than merely human. And so our text declares this wonder of gospel truth:

## **II. We Beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father.**

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father was evident from the very day of Jesus' birth. As the Word made flesh the glory of Jesus was proclaimed by the angels to the Shepherds in the hills of Bethlehem. The glory was evident in the guiding star that led the wise men from the east to the house in Bethlehem where the young Child was to be found. That He was but a baby or toddler made no difference for they beheld the glory of the Lord, and knelt before Him in adoration and praise.

We too come and worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. (Psalm 95:6) The Spirit of God has opened our eyes to behold His glory with eyes of faith. In so many ways the glory as of the only begotten of the Father was made plainly evident. It was seen in Jesus' teaching, "*for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" (Mark 1:22) He did indeed possess the authority of the Word of God, the Word made flesh. This glory was evident in the signs and wonders which Jesus, countless signs and wonders, "*that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" (Luke 7:22) His glory was seen even in Jesus' crucifixion and death, leading the one malefactor and then also the Roman centurion to recognize in Jesus the glory of the only begotten Son of God.

All this was recorded for us that we might know the truth that sets us free from sin and death. And yet there is so much more, for the death of Jesus upon the cross was not the end of the story of His life, but the opening of the vista of Jesus' divine glory and majesty. The glory of Jesus' resurrection speaks to us of the marvel of our justification. Jesus manifested openly and fully His divine majesty.

What was made evident for the disciples to see with their own eyes and to touch with their own hands, to know and believe and share with us is that: "*in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*"

(Colossians 2:9-10) What we see in Jesus, the Word become flesh *“is the image of the invisible God.”* (Colossians 1:15)

Where does this leave us in our Christmas worship but back to pondering this mystery that the Word became flesh. Herein lies the grace of our God that is our salvation. In Jesus, the Word who was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary we behold Jesus “being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (Hebrews 1:3-4)

**“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 1:14)

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)