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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 3, 2021
2nd Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 2:1-18

Hymns: 95:1-5; 98:1-3; 96; 97:1,4

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

Sermon Text: John 1:1-5,14

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.

¹⁴And 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: Looking at something beyond our understanding.

That is what we do at Christmastime every year. We celebrate something so wonderful that it fills our hearts with joy and wonder. Today we are looking at that wonder.

When the shepherds shared what they had heard about the Baby Jesus we are told that “*all those who heard it marveled at those things that were told them by the shepherds.*” (Luke 2:18) In his first epistle to Timothy the Apostle Paul addresses the incarnation of Christ with the expression, “*without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.*” (1 Timothy 3:16)

When we think of a mystery, we most often think in terms of something that will be solved by the end of the movie or the book we are reading. We need to think of this mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God as a great enigma! It is something that we cannot understand or wrap our brain around. Indeed, we know the facts, and we are told the truth, but the truth is greater than we can comprehend. And yet this is what we celebrate each and every Christmas.

Every Christmas season we read the reports of Jesus’ birth from the different gospels that record it. The words of John that serve as our text this morning are as familiar as the rest. Some might consider them poetic. They speak of the depth of the truth of the coming of Christ into the world. They remind us of the wonder that is before us in the Christmas gospel.

THEME: The Word Became Flesh!

We need to start at the beginning, literally at the beginning as John does in our text. This leads us in properly --

I. Identifying the Word.

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.

Perhaps we think of these words as being abstract, personifying something that isn’t a living being. We are talking about words after all, and sometimes people say something like, “Words taking on a life of their own.” That is NOT what is being communicated to us with these opening verses of our text. Rather these words take us back to the beginning, to the creation of the universe, and

exactly how God brought this world into existence. God did it with words, with His Word. With the power of His command. God said, “Let there be!” and there was! And it was good. Now John is telling us that at the creation the eternal Son of God was present and active in the creation all things. The eternal Son of God was and is that Word which was at the beginning with God, which brought all things into existence. Even with the creation of man, whom God formed out of the dust of the earth we are told of the conference of God, “Let us make man in our own image.” The Word was present with power also in the creation of man. Nothing was made without the Word. Nothing was made without the presence of the eternal and only begotten Son of God.

Review the facts and make sure we properly identify the Word. The Word was God. The Word was the Creator along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Word was that creating power of God that called all things into being so that all things were made very good! What an impact the Word had upon the world.

That impact is only made greater when we consider the birth of our Savior. It is the impact of --

II. Illuminating a Dark World.

At the creation God commanded that there be light, and there was light! Before that there was only darkness. We get that, and we marvel at the power of God to call light into existence, to cause light to shine in the universe. That light was key to much in the universe. Without light no one could see. Without that light coming from the sun there would be no warmth, there would be no life. That light coming from the sun as God caused it to come from the sun is a life-giving power in God’s creation.

Now consider the truth reported by our text regarding the Word.

John 1:4-5 “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.”

Without the Word there is only darkness. Of course these words of our text are not talking about physical darkness, but spiritual

darkness. That was the kind of darkness Isaiah wrote of when the Holy Spirit led Isaiah to write. *“Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people.”* (Isaiah 60:2) That is the state of a fallen mankind. Darkness enshrouds the heart of fallen man. It is an intense deep darkness. There is not the smallest ray of light that finds its origins in man. It is deep darkness. Without light there is no life. One finds spiritual life in the world because the Word is that Light that shines in a dark place.

But even then, we are told that fallen man cannot and will not comprehend that light. Fallen man prefers the darkness of idolatry to the light of Christ. Fallen man lives in the darkness of that idolatry and yet claims to bring enlightenment to dark souls. It is all a false and misleading dream in which countless souls have been led down the path to destruction.

Life is found in that light that shines from the Word. It shines upon us because of that wonder that the Word was made flesh --

III. Revealing the Grace of God.

We have identified the Word as being true God, in fact God from all eternity and the almighty power of God in creation. This sets us up for a tremendous revelation.

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.

Those first few words of that verse of our text say so much. The Creator took upon Himself our flesh and blood. The Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father lived among us on this earth. He lived as true God and as very Man. He was tempted like we are tempted, and yet **without** sin. He endured the struggles of life. He struggled with making a living, with family concerns such as the care of His mother, Mary. He became one of us and lived among us. And yet what our text also teaches us is that His glory as the Son of God was revealed.

His glory was seen most clearly in the signs and wonders Jesus performed during His three-year ministry. However, His glory was

also revealed in His teaching. He faithfully presented the truth of the Kingdom of God, the truth that leads to salvation, the truth about Himself as the Christ, the Savior of the world. Those close to Him saw His glory, even as it was revealed for all to see that all might know and believe in Him as Redeemer and Lord.

The Lord has opened our eyes of faith so that we see His glory. We see the wonder of Almighty God in the face of Jesus Christ, in the face of the Babe of Bethlehem. And yet, although He is Almighty God we also know and believe that *“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (John 3:17)

What we celebrate each Christmas is this salvation. The glory that Jesus revealed both in His miracles and in His teaching was full of grace and truth. Grace is the undeserved kindness of God toward sinful mankind. The Apostle Paul wrote of this wonder of Jesus’ birth with these words: *“When the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”* (Titus 3:4-5a) When Jesus was born, when the Word was made flesh the kindness and love of God appeared in that stable lying in that manger in Bethlehem of Judea.

Oh yes, John also declared that the truth was evident in Jesus’ glory. The truth is what the angels declared to the shepherds, a truth for all people, *“There is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:11) The truth is that there is salvation in no one else, *“for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Jesus is that name in which our salvation has been revealed, for *“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)

“The Word becomes incarnate
And yet remains on high,
And cherubim sing anthems
To shepherds from the sky.
Repeat the hymn again:
To God on high be glory
And peace on earth to men!

“Since all He comes to ransom,
By all be He adored,

The Infant born in Bethl'm, the Savior and the Lord.

Repeat the hymn again:

To God on high be glory And peace on earth to men!"

(The Lutheran Hymnal 76:2,4)

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. (Romans15:13)