

Christmas Day 2009 – John 1:1-14

A saleswoman, who for weeks on end heard the department store Christmas music, exclaimed in late December, "I never want to hear another Christmas carol again!" Do you ever feel that way? Perhaps you have been listening to Christmas music for so many days and down through so many years that now, on Christmas morning it seems to be more than a little repetitious. God forbid that the observance of Christ's birthday should become so repetitious that we lose our love, awe, and holy joy when we hear the Christmas gospel or sing those beautiful Christian Christmas carols! Therefore, on this festival day we sing once again, "O, come, let us adore Him!"

Adore whom? Whose birth are we celebrating? The world may know Jesus was born a tiny human baby in Bethlehem, but who is He really? **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** That baby born in Bethlehem is the eternal Son of God. John further identifies Him: **"Through Him all things were made"** (v. 2). At the beginning of time God the Son shared in that mighty work of creation. At Christmas, wonder of wonders, this eternal Son of God and Creator of the universe became a creature. Oh Come, let us adore Him! Let us drop to our knees with prophets, apostles, shepherds and wise men. This Word made flesh is the mighty God.

Why does John call Him the Word? Look at the person next to you. Can you tell what he or she is thinking? (I wish you would have gotten me a different gift? I really didn't need another toaster! Is dinner going to be ready on time? How many pounds will I have to lose after the holiday?) We cannot tell what another person is thinking unless he puts his thoughts into word. God put his thoughts into words, inspiring the writers of Sacred Scripture. But He wanted to tell us even more. So if you're wondering what God thinks and feels about you, turn to the Word made flesh, Jesus! He is the living Bible. Without Him we could only assume God is an angry Judge who has sentenced us all to die as punishment for our sins, or perhaps He is simply an error-prone deity who let death ruin his creation! But since Jesus has come to live our life, die our death, and rise to give us eternal life, we know what God really feels about us – He loves you, you, and you, yes He loves the world, everyone of us!

"How can true God become man?" That question causes many to reject the Word made flesh and think of Jesus as just a very special human. "How can this be?" Mary had asked the angel Gabriel. Gabriel answered, "With God nothing is impossible." "How can this be?" Let that question not cause you to doubt, but rather let it turn your mind to the love, wisdom, and power of God! "Not how, but why?" is the real question for which we need an answer. Why did God become man?

Verse 4 answers: **"In Him was life."** You can't say that about any other baby born into this world. In fact despite the joy in the heart of a proud father or mother as they hold their newborn, the almost horrific thought that ought to be lurking in the back of their minds is, "In my child is death! Every breath he draws is closer to his last. How can my child have eternal life?" The Bible informs us that in our natural birth we were all dead in transgressions and sins. Physical death is the symptom that reminds us that we would be eternally dead unless somehow God rescues us. But in Jesus is life, the life of the God the Son, full, complete, and eternal. He

lived the life of the perfect human, all to restore a perfection that God now credits to us. He came to willingly suffer and die – knowing He would pay the punishment of the world’s sin so that God now forgives our sin freely. Then He would rise from the dead to live forever in glory and to bring all who believe in Him to that eternal life also. Hear again the heavenly messenger, **“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord!”**

Oh, how I want to believe that, even more strongly than ever before! Where does faith come from? John tells us that all who believe in Christ are born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. We like to think we can come to faith by our own decision if God makes the right offer to us and we make the right choice – because then we’re in control. In reality, the Holy Spirit through the Gospel in Word and sacrament gives us a rebirth to eternal life. And why do we need to continue in that Word and Sacrament, not just at Christmas, but all year long?

How many of you have seen the movie, “Narnia?” Remember how it begins? For safety's sake, many of the children who lived in London during the nightly bombings by the German air force during World War II were sent to stay with relatives or friends in the country. But some families had no one to send their children to outside the city. So these kids lived with their families, sometimes in bombed-out ruins, often on poor rations and without sanitary facilities. Yet studies of both sets of children later found that despite the nightly bombings, the children who stayed with their families emerged with fewer emotional disturbances than those who were sent to safer quarters but separated from their parents. The loving presence of the parents, even in a war zone, made the difference.

You live in a war zone. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh assault us every day. We need the loving presence of God to keep us alive in faith and love. As the Word was made flesh to dwell among us once to save us, now the living Word, Jesus, comes still to our hearts by His written Word, and by His miraculous union with bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Jesus’ life, flowing to us by these Means of Grace, keep us truly alive in faith for eternal life, growing in God's love and knowledge, growing in love for our heavenly Father, serving the Lord in a life that truly counts as we await the end of the war and life forever in heaven! O come, let us adore Him, for He is our life!

And what would Christmas be without light? In the darkest time of the year we decorate our church and homes with many bright and colorful lights to bring us cheer. **“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...the true Light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”** The world’s darkness in winter may make you feel gloomy, but the darkness of sin and unbelief would condemn you to hell’s gloom forever. Thank the Lord that Jesus is our light! Jesus enlightens our hearts to see Him and believe in Him as the one for whose sake God has forgiven all our sins. Thus He lights for us the path to heaven. The light of Jesus’ Word also teaches us right from wrong, and guides us to live in God’s love as we walk through this world in a lifestyle that brings inner peace and contentment.

Have you ever traveled at night in a blinding snow storm? How thankful you were when you finally saw the light of the city, guiding you home. When the clouds of sickness swirl around us, and death’s darkness blinds our eyes to all earthly light, then how thankful we’ll be to see Christ’s light shining from the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the place that needs no sun, for Jesus at the center of the throne is its Light. That Baby born in Bethlehem, that Jesus is Mighty God, our Life, our Light! O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the LORD! Amen.