

+ In Nomine Jesu +

John 1:1-18

Date: December 25, 2025

Liturgical Date: Christmas

Title: The word became flesh

*In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

In this way, God created all things out of nothing. The light was not even created yet, nor any of light's components. There were no pre-existing photons that God arranged into waves and sent along at the speed of light. There were no photons, no speed of light - not even a  $c$  for Einstein - before God said, "Let there be light." So also with all of creation. No matter was in existence that God would have used to put all things together. The six days of creation followed the same pattern. God spoke the word. The word created. And it was good.

On the sixth day, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God had the image of God - the word - sit as the model, so to speak, when God created man in the image of God. Therefore, man was in perfect communion with God. Man's will and intellect and powers were pointed towards God for obedience and worship.

And man enjoyed life with God - an immortal life. God did not create death, nor was man created in the image of God to die. As the highest creation, man was to live to conform with God's will. God created man in the image of God so that man would have fellowship with God. And God's will for man was made plain in this command. "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The day came when man ate of the fruit. The serpent tempted. The woman took the fruit and ate. The man also ate. And the Lord God came in the cool of the day looking for man, who was created to live with God forever. Man was hiding. The shame and tragedy that man who was created to commune with God in paradise ran away from the one who gave him life.

God's word must hold. The day that man ate of the tree he would surely die. God could not go back on his word, for he would be a liar. God could not wipe away creation and try again, a divine mulligan, for that would make death too great of a problem for God to conquer. Man had lost the immortality and life that came with being created in the image of God, and in their place remained only death, ignorance of God, and hostility towards the creator.

God could not leave his highest creation a captive of death. How could man be freed from captivity to death? No law or moral code could help. Man could not pay the debt owed by following the law. No secret knowledge of God could help. Man was ignorant of God and would not even seek God, especially the hidden things of God. Man was totally helpless.

God would restore the image of God in man. To bring life to man, the one who sat as the model - the image of God - the word - the one through whom all things were made - he would restore the image of God in man. The word in whom was life would restore life to man. The sentence of death the word would take upon himself. And by doing so, he would bear that punishment for all men, exchanging his life so that man would live.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. Man had turned against God, hiding from God, turning away and cursing God. So God came to men, in the flesh, incarnate. Man chose death and embraced violence and hatred. The Son of God came to make known the Father, to make known the Father's love for the world. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son.

God's love is seen in his Son coming in the flesh - for you. Man ate of the fruit and was sentenced to death. Physically, the body would take its last breath and return to the dust from which it was taken. The body was not created to die, yet it does. Spiritually, man would be separated from God forever. God is life, and man deserved death. And not just the first man was under this sentence. All who came from this first man were born into death. No man could escape the inevitable or rescue himself.

Only the word made flesh could rescue men from death. Only the word could come into creation and take on that sentence of death in the place of all mankind. The word becomes flesh to die - for you. God cannot die, but God takes on human flesh to put himself under the punishment of death. He dies physically, as on the cross he speaks, "It is finished," and gives up his spirit. And he is forsaken by God. The word drinks the full cup of God's wrath. God's justice is poured out completely upon his Son.

The word becomes flesh to destroy death and bring life to all men. It is as if the king has his subjects sent into exile and captivity in a foreign land. The subjects cannot escape from their prison. The enemy is too powerful. So the king himself goes to the foreign land and offers himself as the substitute for his people in captivity. The subjects go free. The king is held captive by the strong enemy. But the king is stronger. He breaks free from captivity and leads the parade of his subjects throughout their homeland.

So it is with this king, the word made flesh. Man who was created in the image of God for life is captured by death. Who can escape from death that is coming? No man can pay for his own life, and who can ransom the life of another? So the word himself breaks into creation, in the flesh, chooses the manner of his own death - not by growing old or disease (things we fear). His own people did not receive him. He is put to death in the most violent means at the hands of lawless men - the same people whom he came to save. Yet he chooses to go to death by his own people, thus saving them. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. All men will behold him lifted up on the cross. And all the ends of the earth

shall see the salvation of our God.

The word frees men from death by his own death. Yet the grave cannot hold him. He lays down his life and takes it up again. The word whose life is the light of men shines forth on those who live in the shadow of death. Life is stronger than death. This resurrected king leads with joy, and the people break forth together into singing, for the Lord has comforted his people. The word - the image of God - is once again the model for creation. But now he is the model for a new creation. The image of God is full of immortality and fellowship with God. Now God recreates those who receive him, who believe in his name. God creates them anew in his image, so that you will be made new, immortal and with God.

Now that the word has become flesh, what is there to fear? Do we still live as if death were our master? We have been claimed by the word made flesh. We have no fear of death, for death has been dismantled. We can even mock death. O Death, where is your victory? We confess and bear witness to the light that has come into the world. We live as children of God for this time and for eternal time. And we sing in celebration of the incarnation of the Word.

On this Christmas morning, we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of the invasion, the fullness of time. Our Lord comes to rescue us from physical death and from spiritual death. This body will take its last breath. But why fear that day, when the Lord who also took his last breath on the cross is filled with life on Easter morning? And we are created in his image. So also, the resurrection of the body, this body, this flesh, is coming soon. Behold, he is making all things new.

And spiritual death has been overturned for us. No longer are we hostile to God, ignorant of him and his word. Rather, we gather, especially on this day of Christmas, the nativity of our Lord, to hear of our King who saves us. We come together, even as we live in a world consumed by death, to listen to the word of life - as if we really are living in a foreign land and hearing how things will be in our homeland, with God in his restored and renewed creation.

We confess to the life that we have to come. If persecutions come in this life or if an opportunity to make a good confession comes, we have no fear. This world did not know him nor did the world know the life that he brings. Neither does the world know us, the children of God. So the "if" part of persecutions coming is really a "when" persecutions come. But at that moment, make a good confession. Nothing can steal the life that we have in Jesus. What can man do to me? Even if death must come, the Lord of life has dominion over all things, including that last enemy to be destroyed.

We live as children of God for this time and for eternal time. For now, we have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Only the earthly things are put to death in you - immorality and impurity, evil and covetousness. No more anger or wrath, lying or obscene talk. In its place are the fruits of bearing the image of God - compassion and kindness, patience and forgiving. As God is - particularly on this Christmas as he makes known his compassion and love at his Son's birth - so are the children of God.

For eternal time, we as the children of God have an inheritance. Man was created to

enjoy fellowship with God in paradise, without end. And so it will be for us, as the word gives us eternal gifts freely. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

So on Christmas morning - this Christmas morning - we sing of the incarnation, of the Word becoming flesh. In our opening hymn, O Come All Ye Faithful, or Adeste Fideles, the faithful come triumphant, singing, "Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; Son of the Father, now in flesh appearing!" And later, "Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing;" Let us adore him, the word made flesh, Christ our Lord.

We sing with the angels in the Gloria - Hark the Herald Angels Sing, as the greater Gloria returns to our divine service on this Christmas morning after the Advent fast. We confess Christ's divinity, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate deity." In Christ, all the fullness of the deity dwells bodily. The word brings gifts to men, "Light and life to all He brings." And the renewal of creation and the resurrection of the dead is here, "Born that man no more may die, Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth."

In our sequence hymn, "O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly", we sing of how Christ has elevated our human nature by becoming flesh. "Who our race has honored thus, That he deigns to dwell with us." The word became flesh and dwelt among us. God is in the midst of his people. And the word honors us with his presence, the presence of the creator who renews our lives.

The hymn of the day, "Of The Father's Heart Begotten," has so much of John's gospel intertwined in it. The eternal word is praised for being the only begotten Son of the Father from eternity, "Of the Father's heart begotten, ere the world from chaos rose". His work in creation is praised, "By his word was all created; he commanded and 'twas done;" And why did the eternal word become incarnate? "He assumed this mortal body, frail and feeble, doomed to die, that the race from dust created might not perish utterly."

Even the prolific hymn writers Martin Luther and Isaac Watts give nod to the Word who made all things. With Luther, we sing, "Ah, Lord, though You created all, How weak you are, so poor and small." With Watts, we sing, "He rules the world with truth and grace" as grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. He is born for you. He died for you. He lives for you. And he will make you new. We have much to sing about.

A Merry Christmas to you all.

+ Soli Deo Gloria +

Rev. Michael J. Bahr