

Christmas Day  
December 25, 2011

John 1:1-14  
55-37-50/68/65/53-62

May the peace the angel proclaimed, the peace the Christ child brings, fill your heart and lead you to give glory to God with your life. Amen.

Ponder the Miracle in the Manger – “The Word Became Flesh”

- I. He is the eternal Son of God.
- II. He is our almighty Creator.
- III. He is our gracious Savior.

Dear Christian friends,

It seems weird to have this for the gospel reading. For many of us the **Christmas gospel** is Luke's account of Christmas. **“Joseph going to Bethlehem because he was of the house and line of David. Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes (strips of linen) and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”** THAT'S the Christmas gospel. We did hear that in yesterday's services.

Yet even as we kneel today at the manger we need these verses from John to SHED LIGHT on **what we see** in the manger. We **need these verses** to understand the real meaning and **joy** – yes, the REAL MIRACLE – of Christmas. John makes no mention of the **barn** – the **manger** – the **shepherds**. John wants nothing to DISTRACT us from the Baby Jesus.

As we kneel at the manger – with our hearts and eyes fixed on the Baby Jesus – PONDER THE MIRACLE in the Manger – **“The Word Became Flesh.”** PONDER the miracle that the Babe of Bethlehem 1)is the eternal Son of God, 2)our almighty Creator, 3)our gracious Savior.

**I. He is the eternal Son of God.**

Today we recall a VERY SPECIAL DAY in **human history** – but we really don't know if Jesus was born on December 25 or not. Today we celebrate not the ACTUAL DAY but the HISTORICAL FACT of Jesus' birth.

**With these verses** John takes us EVEN FARTHER BACK than **“the days of Caesar Augustus while Quirinius was governor or Syria.”** **“In the beginning,”** John writes. Those are also the very first words of the Bible - **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** John, however, takes us **back** to BEFORE God had even begun to create the world. **Back when all there was** was God – **“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”** PONDER the miracle! That new-born Babe – just hours old – is the ETERNAL Son of God!

WHY does John call Jesus **“the Word”**? Think of what words do. **With words** we communicate with other people. If I DON'T SAY anything you have no idea what I'm thinking – what I'm like, etc. **For you** to get to know me I HAVE TO TALK with you. **If God doesn't talk** to us HOW can we really know God – **really know** what God's like – what God is thinking – what God thinks OF US?! We could guess – but do you really want to build your **personal relationship** with God on GUESSES and HUNCHES?

Jesus is God's **“Word”** – God's FINAL Word to us. Recall the epistle reading. **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”** To KNOW GOD – to know what God is **really like** – to know what God thinks of you – what God's will and plans are for you – LISTEN TO JESUS!

Listen to Jesus because Jesus is the EXPERT on God – the **expert** because He is God! ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.”*** Jesus ***“was with God”*** - He is a SEPARATE and DISTINCT Person – distinct from the Father – yet enjoying a **loving, personal relationship** with the Father. Jesus is not the Father – ***“the Word was WITH God, and the Word was God.”*** PONDER the miracle of the Holy Trinity – ONLY ONE real, **eternal** God yet three separate Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

PONDER the miracle in the manger – ***“and the Word became flesh.”*** There IN THE FLESH is the eternal Son of God! God has become a man. The Baby Jesus is ***“Immanuel” – “God with us.”*** He who is JUST HOURS OLD in the manger – is God ***“from everlasting to everlasting.”*** Kneel at the manger – hold the Baby Jesus – and confess with all Christians, ***“My Lord and my GOD!”***

Lying there in the manger – wrapped in those strips of cloth – Jesus looks so CUTE and **cuddly**. Just like every other baby the **Baby Jesus** also looks very FRAGILE and HELPLESS. The Baby Jesus can’t walk or talk yet. He needs His mother Mary to **feed** and **change** Him. He needs Joseph to **provide** for Him and **protect** Him. Yet PONDER the miracle in the manger! That NEW-BORN Son of the Virgin Mary...

## II. He is our almighty Creator.

John’s words are SIMPLE – CLEAR and EMPHATIC – ***“through Him all things were made.”*** Lest we miss the point John adds, ***“Without Him nothing was made that has been made.”*** All three persons of the Holy Trinity were actively involved in creating our world. Paul echoed John’s words when he told the Colossians Christians, ***“For by Him (Jesus) all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by Him and for Him.”*** The epistle reading told us that even STILL TODAY Jesus ***“sustains all things by His powerful word.”***

PONDER the miracle **in the manger!** Kneel at the manger – hold the Baby Jesus **in your arms** and ask yourself, “WHO created the animals in all their **vast array**? Who created the seas and controls the weather? Who caused your crops and **gardens** to produce so abundantly this year? Who created YOU? Who has kept you alive to this very moment? Who has so bountifully provided for you all through your life?” WHO? That little Baby you’re holding in your arms! The Baby Jesus is your almighty Creator BORN A CREATURE – born your Brother! HE ***“through whom all things were made”*** – HE who ***“sustains all things by His powerful word”*** – HE ***“became flesh.”***

John continues. ***“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*** God is the source of all PHYSICAL life. God gives life to all the animals and **plants** and keeps them alive. But this life is MORE than **just physical** life. We humans are a SPECIAL CREATION. We are a body AND a soul. God gives us physical – biological – life. God also created us to have SPIRITUAL and ETERNAL life with Him. God’s creation plan for us humans was for us to live in a CLOSE – SPECIAL – LOVING – HARMONIOUS never-ending relationship with Him.

The OPPOSITE of life and light are death and **darkness**. **In the Bible** death and darkness picture sin and its DEVASTATING, DAMNING consequences. Ignoring and defying our Creator – **not letting** our Creator control our lives – that’s **rebellion**. Sin doesn’t lead to FREEDOM and HAPPINESS and FUN. Sin only makes a mess in our relationship with God and in our personal lives. Sin only leads to death and the ***“outer darkness”*** of hell – banished forever from **God’s presence** – sentenced forever to hell’s **punishment**.

PONDER the miracle in the manger! Kneel at the manger. Hold the Baby Jesus in your arms. ***“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*** Jesus came as He later put it, ***“that (we) may***

**have life and have it to the full.”** Jesus tells us, **“I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.”** ONLY IN Jesus do we have God’s forgiveness of all our sins. ONLY in Jesus do we have peace with God – eternal life in heaven when we die.

PONDER the miracle! God has not abandoned us in our sin! God has not left us in the **death** and **darkness** of our rebellion. Shining bright in the manger is our Creator our **“life and light.”** TAKE AWAY Jesus – leave Jesus in the manger and go on with your life **without Him** – WHAT do you have? Just a wasted life that ends with death and hell. No light – IN THE DARK about God’s **love**, forgiveness, promises. PONDER the miracle in the manger! Kneel at the manger. Hold the Baby Jesus and never ever LET GO - never put Him down!

### III. He is our gracious Savior.

**“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us”** – for 33 years to be exact. PONDER the miracle of why the **“Word became flesh.”** **“Unto you is born this day a SAVIOR!”** Paul wrote Timothy, **“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”** Jesus tells us that He **“came to seek and to save that which was lost”** – that He **“did not come (here) to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

PONDER the miracle! Can God love YOU and me **so much** that He would leave the glories of heaven – taken on our flesh and blood – JUST TO BE our Savior? Hold the Baby Jesus in your arms! Can we be so important and precious to the Creator of **“ALL things”** that He would do everything JUST SO WE could be reconciled with Him and live forever with Him in His **eternal, heavenly** glory? Hold the Baby Jesus in your arms! **“The Word became flesh”** and IN OUR PLACE He was the loving, obedient creature we never could be. **“The Word became flesh”** to one day die on the cross bearing the sin of the world – to die as the ALL-SUFFICIENT sacrifice for the sins of the world. **“The Word became flesh”** to conquer death and grave for us by His own triumphant resurrection from the dead. PONDER the miracle! Kneel at the manger. Hold the Baby Jesus – your GOD – your SAVIOR – your sure hope of heaven!

As we ponder the miracle that **“the Word became flesh”** “FOR US and for our salvation” – how so fitting and SO SPECIAL to **come** to the MIRACLE of Holy Communion. He who “was with God in the beginning” – who **“became flesh”** in Bethlehem – He today personally invites you and me, **“Take eat, take drink** the very body and blood that I gave into death on the cross for the forgiveness of all your sins. I **“became flesh”** FOR YOU and here’s the proof. This is HOW MUCH I love you. You ARE forgiven. You will live with Me forever in heaven.” Come to Holy Communion and hear your Jesus say, “Merry Christmas!”

PONDER the miracle in the manger. We can’t fully understand or **explain** it. We PONDER – we believe – we rejoice. We hold the Baby Jesus in our **arms** and **hearts**. MY God. MY Savior. **“The Word became flesh”** FOR ME. What a miracle! Amen.

Luther’s Explanation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article (in bulletin)