

Sermonette for December 2, 2012 – Advent 1

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Theme: In the Beginning was Jesus . . .

After Christmas we will be starting a Bible class on the Life of Christ, and the board for Adult discipleship and the Elders of Immanuel all agreed that we would use the services in December to prepare us for this study.

Let me start today's devotion with a question: when did the Life of Christ begin? Was it when he was born in Bethlehem? Was it when he was conceived of the Holy Spirit? Actually the answer is that the Life of Christ has no beginning. You see Jesus, as the Son of the God, existed from eternity. It is true that He didn't exist the same way that he does now – ever since his birth in Bethlehem. Before his birth He existed only as true God. Now, He exists as true God and true man. He has a human body and attributes just like we have – yet still retaining every attribute of His divine nature. All of this is a profound and wonderful mystery – that the Son of God should take on human flesh and blood to save us. Words fail at describing how it is possible.

Now one might wonder, what was Jesus – the Son of God – doing until his birth in Bethlehem? Was He just waiting in heaven? Far from it! Jesus – from before the creation of the world – has been actively involved in planning, creating and saving us. St. Paul writes: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*ⁱ In other words, Jesus – together with God the Father - foresaw the human race falling into sin; even though He created a perfect world. In spite of this fact He, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, decided to save us – even though He knew that He would have to suffer and die for our sins. Jesus saw us from eternity and marked us as his own so that, through faith, we might have eternal life.

After making that wonderful decision from eternity, Jesus became active in creating the universe – as our Gospel lesson states: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*ⁱⁱ When God spoke, the voice of His Son was heard. Everything in heaven and on earth was created by and through Jesus. And not only did He create the universe, he sustains it as well.ⁱⁱⁱ

And don't just imagine that the Son of God – after creating all things – merely sat up in heaven waiting for His birth. He was actively involved calling, gathering and enlightening his Old Testament people, just as He called, gathered and enlightened us through the means of his Word. Every time the LORD spoke in the Old Testament, it was in fact the person of Christ who was speaking since he is the Word of the Lord. Every appearance of the LORD was, in fact, an appearance of Jesus before his birth – since St. John writes: *No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.*^{iv} Jesus was the one who promised a Savior after Adam and Eve sinned.^v He is the one who saved Noah and his family from the flood.^{vi} He is the one who appeared to Abraham and promised him a son through whom all nations would be blessed.^{vii} Under the title “Angel of the LORD” Jesus appeared to Moses in the burning bush,^{viii} and then again on Mount Sinai. He accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt as we read in our second lesson for today.^{ix} He led Joshua's armies to conquer Canaan.^x He called to Gideon to rescue His people,^{xi} and prophets like Elijah to warn them of their sins.^{xii} He, the pre-incarnate Christ, is the one who worked in all things – correcting and directing his Old Testament believers – so that everything would be just right for His birth in Bethlehem as our Savior.

Jesus once said to some Jews: *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*^{xiii} The story of Jesus does not begin in Bethlehem. The story of the Son of God has no beginning – just as He himself has no beginning and end. Old Testament history is really HIS story – the account of Jesus getting all things ready for his greatest act of love: taking on human flesh and blood in order to suffer and die for the sins of all mankind.

And what comfort can we take from all this? First of all, what a Savior we have! His love for us is timeless - it has no beginning. Just imagine Jesus seeing you from before creation, loving you and choosing you to believe in him! Just think of Jesus working in time to make it all happen – his planning to suffer and die for you, so that you can have eternal life. This amazing love is all directed at you.

What should we do in respond to this? Since Jesus took so much care in planning and executing our salvation, let us take the time to learn about it. As we do this, we will grow in love and appreciation for all he has done. We will find strength to overcome temptation and learn to thank Jesus by living to His glory. We gain encouragement from others as we study the word together, and find strength to bear under whatever difficulty we might have to face for the sake of Christ.

In the beginning was the Word. In the beginning was Jesus. May the LORD keep is in the salvation He planned for us from eternity and makes us zealous to study his Word. Amen

References

ⁱ Ephesians 1:3-6

ⁱⁱ John 1:3

ⁱⁱⁱ Colossians 1:15-17

^{iv} John 1:18

^v Genesis 3:15

^{vi} Genesis 7ff

^{vii} Genesis 18:2ff

^{viii} Compare Exodus 3:2ff with John 8:58

^{ix}1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (cf. Jude 1:5 footnote: many early manuscripts have the word for “Jesus” instead of “lord”)

^x Joshua 5:14ff

^{xi} Judges 6:11

^{xii} 2 Kings 1:3

^{xiii} John 5:39