

Sermon for December 25, 2013 – Christmas Day

John 1:1-5, 9-14 (NKJV)

Theme: What Child is this?

¹ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁹ That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 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.

It is the story of our humanity. It has happened at least 7 billion times in our generation and billions of times more in history past, and yet, to those involved, each time it is a small miracle.

It is the story of birth. A mother holds her newborn. He is so small, so weak. The newborn does not even have full control of his body; his muscles are not fully developed. He cannot speak. The baby is in so much need. Its parents need to nourish, strengthen, clothe and protect it.

As the mother looks at her child, she loves him. So many discoveries in the years to come. What will the personality of this child be? Who will this child become? It is the story of our human race – the story of our birth.

Can you recall the birth of your children? Can you recall holding your infant son or daughter in your hands for the first time – so fragile that you are afraid you might break them? Can you recall the wonderment you had for your children – Who will they become?

Such were the feelings of Mary and Joseph as they held baby Jesus, with one big exception: they knew who this child was. They knew that this birth was a genuine miracle of miracles – not merely because Mary was a virgin, but because of who this child was that she held in her arms.

It's a paradox that seems beyond belief, and yet those who believe have the right to be called children of God. Let us consider the baby in Mary's arms under the theme: **What child is this?**

Our sermon text begins: *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.* Who or what is the Word? The Word is obviously Jesus. He is the one all of Scripture points to and testifies about (John 5:39). He is the only one who can reveal God to us. Jesus is the Word of God who was with God from the beginning. Not only was he with God, He was God.

³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* Jesus is the all-powerful LORD. Think about how majestic and powerful God's creation is. Think about the billions and billions of stars and galaxies that fill our unfillable universe. Think about how our powerful sun is like a mere molecule in vastness of space. Think about all the power that went into creating all this. Think about all the knowledge that goes into sustaining the universe.

And now think about the baby in Mary's arms. What a paradox! The Creator of all, himself born, the all-powerful God not being able to control his arms from flailing around, the One who knows all things unable to speak, the Helper of all Himself helpless – this was the baby in Mary's arms. This was Jesus. Mary did not have to wonder what this child would become, because this is who this child was right now.

John writes: ⁴ *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.* Can you imagine the joy, mingled with fear, Mary and Joseph had holding Jesus in their arms? It is fearful enough holding your first child – hoping you don't break it, but Joseph and Mary did not simply hold their child – they held the Messiah. They held their God.

Mary and Joseph understood that this baby, their precious Jesus, was their Savior. They knew he was the revelation of God's love to the world. They knew that he was the eternal Author of Life whom God sent to this earth to win life for all those doomed to eternal death because of their sins. Mary and Joseph understood these things about Jesus because God had revealed it to them through promise given by Gabriel.

We also rejoice in knowing exactly who Jesus is. We know only because God himself has revealed it to us in Scripture. We know that Jesus is the full revelation of God and his love. We know that he came to bring salvation by perfectly keeping the law we have not kept for us. We know that he came to suffer the punishment and death we deserved because of our sins. We know he came to rise from the dead in order to open the gates of heaven for us. He came to restore our broken relationship with himself. He came to shine the light of his grace and mercy to all mankind, to us who live in a world of darkness, a world of sinful ignorance which is separated from God. He came to give us eternal life.

We know these things because God revealed them to us in Scripture. His Spirit opened our hearts to see and believe these truths. But not all people receive Jesus in faith. The darkness, the majority of people lost in sin and unbelief, have not understood what God was doing at Christmas, namely:

⁹ *That . . . the true Light which gives light to every man [was] coming into the world.* ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.* ¹¹ *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*

Most people vaguely know that Christmas has to do with the birth of Jesus. They call it the Christian tradition of Christmas. Even with the secularization of the holidays, we can still find manger scenes in public view and pictures of Mary and Jesus on our postage stamps. The message is there, but the world does not understand it. The world cannot come to grips with the fact that a baby - a helpless baby - born some 2000 years ago is its God. This idea seems like utter foolishness, and the world does not want this kind of God - just as Jesus' very own people did not want him.

Yes, the Jewish people, God's own holy nation which was entrusted with the sacred promises and prophecies of the coming Christ, to whom were foretold all the things that were fulfilled in Jesus, by and large rejected him. Why? Was it because Jesus did not fulfill the promises of Scripture? No, Jesus fulfilled every one of them. Rather it was because the people did not want to believe it to be true. They did not want to believe that this Jesus, this man – a man who looked absolutely no different than any other common man, a man who was poor, a man who was once a baby, who once needed help eating, being clothed, being fed, that this man could possibly be their almighty God.

¹² *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:* ¹³ *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but [born] of God.* There is another Christmas miracle to speak about, namely: the miracle of faith. Humanly speaking, it seems foolish, it seems too much of a paradox to believe that the Creator of all would not only become a member of his creation, but a helpless one at that. And yet, we believe. We believe because

Scripture says so. We know it is true because God has awakened faith in our hearts to receive him. We know that God fulfilled everything he promised concerning our salvation in Christ. We know this because of the Holy Spirit given to us at baptism, which marks us as reborn children of God.

Let us change the picture a bit from Mary and Joseph lifting up baby Jesus, to God the Father lifting up a child and holding it in his arms. Can you imagine it? Picture in your mind God the Father lifting up a child, holding it, loving it - being so happy with that child that he laughs with it. Can you picture how wonderful and loving that scene is? Now look a little closer at the face on the child in your imagination. Who is that child? That child is you!

Christ came to be born on this earth so that we could be born of God. Think again of the paradox: the Son of God became a son of man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God! You are a child of God through faith in Jesus. You have a special loving relationship with the Father. When the Father sees you, he sees a perfect child – one who has no sin because it has been removed from you and crucified with Christ. When God sees you He sees his child with whom he is well-pleased. He promises to work in all things for your eternal benefit. He loves you so very much. You are incredibly special to him.

And don't think that these are just my thoughts – these are God's promises in Scripture. He calls his saints – which you are through faith – precious, and the apple of his eye. The LORD is pleased with you that you come to him. He is pleased with you for believing in his Son. Yes, the birth of Christ at Christmas means that we might be born of God.

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.

This last statement of our text summarizes everything Christmas is about. The eternal Word of God – the Son of God who is God and reveals God to us – made his dwelling among us. He came to be where we are, so we might go where He is.

When we see Jesus, we see God in all his glory – and what a unique glory it is! It is the glory of being born as a weak baby. It is the glory of being tempted like we all are, but being sinless. It is the glory of being rejected, and finally being crucified. It is the glory of rising victorious from the grave, and of opening heaven to all. This is God's great way of saying to us: I love you.

The birth of Christ: it seemed like it was the story of our humanity. Billions of births have happened throughout time, but this story is unique and special. What the human eye sees is a mother holding her precious, defenseless baby. What eyes of faith see is that baby holding, caressing and comforting its mother and all of us. This is the truth of Christmas. Amen.