

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**John 1:9-13**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**December 25, 2015 – Christmas Day**



In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. According to the testimony of St. John, “The true Light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own, but His own received him not. But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become the children of God – who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.” Christmas and light, they just seem to go together. Candlelight Christmas Eve services – lights wrapped around houses and hanging on Christmas tree branches – blinking, twinkling lights – colored lights – white lights, and candles. We just can’t seem to get enough. But these lights have a deeper meaning, reminding us how in Bethlehem, some two thousand years ago, an amazing Light came into the world – a Heavenly Light, a True Light, a Primal Light. In fact, it was more than Light. It was the Source of light – God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. It was the Light that existed even before God uttered His first recorded words, “Let there be light.” This is the Light that will shine for all eternity – long after the sun, the moon, and all the stars of the heavens have been snuffed out.

It was in the town of Bethlehem, so many years ago, that true Life entered into our world – Life conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin. It was the very Word of God taking on human Flesh – and “In Him was the life that was the light of men.” Light and life. Think of it. They are the opposite of darkness and death. For man – turned away from God and into himself – prefers darkness to light, and death to life. Indeed, he hates the light and would like to see it extinguished. He hates the life and would like to kill it or abort it. Even King Herod wanted to kill the Light. Even the little town of Bethlehem had no place for Him on the night of His birth. Our Lord – yet unborn – along with His virgin mother and adoptive father were forced to fend for themselves on that most holy night. Though He deserved a palace, He would lodge in a cave and sleep in a feeding trough. He came to His own, but His would not receive Him.

But God knows how thick the darkness is – and how deep the death in which we live. Consider, for example,

how often we read of a young life shattered by a stray bullet fired from a passing automobile – how a young family is killed in a head-on collision by a drunk driver filled with his own version of holiday cheer – how a spouse abandons a marriage and leaves their partner to grieve and wonder what happened – how a parent dies and leaves a young child without the necessary guidance and support for the difficult years ahead – how children of divorced families are handed off like footballs in a holiday bowl game – shuttled from home to home, forced to celebrate someone else’s holidays like little trained circus bears, bribed with gifts they don’t need, and feeling no one truly cares.

But God didn’t intend it to be this way – this darkness, this death. He filled the darkness with Light. He filled His world with Life. He breathed life into man and made him alive with the breath of God. We are the ones who brought darkness and death. We did it by refusing to hear God’s Word – by not keeping it in our hearts – and by not obeying it. And we must not blame Adam and Eve alone, for we do the same every things they did – as we push our will against God’s – exert our word against His – do what pleases us instead of what pleases Him – serve ourselves instead of others – break our promises – run from our responsibilities – live for our own pleasure – and elevate ourselves by stepping on others. We may try to blame God, but in the end we are the ones responsible for the darkness and death we see all around us.

So we grope around in this darkness and in the shadow of death. And as we experience the loss, the pain, the heartache, the separation, the sickness and the death, we’re willing to grab for anything that promises light and life – quack cures – false religion – junk science – bad philosophy – pseudo-learning – or drugs and alcohol. Yet it seems like the harder we grab, the deeper the darkness grows, and the thicker the death becomes. It’s into this darkness and death that God shines the Light of His Son who came to join forces with us, to be on our side, and to become one with us. He came to dwell among us, full of grace and truth because He knew we could never save ourselves from this darkness and this death.

And so, even as St. John testifies, “The Word became Flesh.” God became a man, and not just any man,

but a Baby cradled in the lap of the Virgin. Who would have thought of such a thing? Indeed, almost every other religion besides Christianity has man becoming god. And while it's true that the Greeks had gods who appeared as men, no other religion has ever had their God becoming a flesh and blood human being. Natural theology cannot bear such a thing as this – that God is man – that He's born – that He hungers, thirsts, cries, wets, burps, bleeds, suffers and dies. Yet this is the true God – the Gift that was laid in the manger for us.

Jesus Christ is Light and Life. He's the Light no darkness can overcome – not the darkness of our sin, nor the darkness of our death. He's stronger than the darkness of our souls, and the death that threatens to overcome us. In fact, these are the very things He conquered with His coming. He conquered them not with a show of strength, but with a show of great weakness – a fragile Infant dependant on His mother, and the broken Man of sorrows hanging on a cross of wood forsaken by His Father because of our sin.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great Light,” said the prophet Isaiah. “Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has Light shined.” Light and Life come to us in the form of a Child. “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Every other government but this one depends on power – a power that rests upon the shoulders of its citizens or its leaders and rulers. But this government – this government of God – rests squarely and solely on the shoulders of a little Child – a little Child who, at the same time, is also old enough and wise enough to be named by such lofty labels as Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Have you ever noticed how much of ancient Christian art seems to depict the Christ Child with an adult face? That may seem strange to our eyes to see Mary holding her Baby who appears years older than He actually is. But is that not exactly what Isaiah was saying? This is no ordinary Child who was born in Bethlehem. This is the eternal Word, through whom all things were made. This is the Light that shone before there was any other light. This is the Life that was alive before there was any other life. This is the eternal Son – who was and is with the Father from all eternity. This is God in human flesh!

This Child – so easily overlooked by Bethlehem, and so easily ignored today – brings the wonderful counsel of God's Word as a lamp for our feet and a light for our

path. This humble Child is no less than the Mighty God, whose arm is strong to save. This little One lying in a manger is very God of very God in whom the fullness of God is pleased to dwell – of the same Divine essence as His Father – True God and true man united in one Person come for the sole purpose of saving us. This Child – born in conflict and rejection – is the Prince of Peace who came to make peace with His blood – to cover our sins, and to cleanse and redeem us. He alone is our Light and our Life. He is the One in whom we live and move and have our being

Holy Scripture attests to the fact that “to all who received Him, to all who believed on His name, He gave power to become the children of God.” Dear friends, Jesus was born of Mary so that you might be born of God. His birth is your birth, His life your life, His death your death, His rising from the dead your resurrection, and His ascension into heaven at the right hand of the Father your glorification. When by faith you received Him as Lord, He made your heart His manger as He took your dead, darkened heart, and filled it with His light and life. In Him God conforms your will to His will, joins His Flesh to your flesh, and gives you new birth by the Holy Spirit whom He sends. Christ calls you His brothers and sisters – and His Father, “our Father.” God has made you like His Son, for indeed you, too, have been virgin born – conceived by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Born of the holy Church, our virgin mother.

My Christmas prayer for you this morning is that you receive this Child anew today and every day – that you open your heart to this wonderful Baby who was born in Bethlehem to save you – that you regularly receive His Word and His forgiveness – and that you regularly partake of His body and His blood in the blessed meal of the Supper so that He might thus fill your darkness with true light, and your death with true life – for that alone is what deep and lasting Christmas joy is really all about. May God grant this to you always for Jesus' sake, Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.