

IN NOMINE JESU

Christ is the Eternal Word of God.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today is the celebration of the arrival of Christ as the baby Jesus, born in Bethlehem. We celebrate this coming of Christ to earth in human flesh, but we are also called to remember that even before He was a baby in a manger, the Christ was God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for all eternity before.

When we try to think of something eternal or infinite, it isn't easy to wrap our minds around. Everything we deal with in our daily lives has a history that began at some point, and will end at some point.

Not only does everything we see around us have a beginning, but the world around us, and even time itself had to have a beginning. In the beginning, these things came into existence; they were created.

John talks about Jesus in a very different way, however, he uses specific words to show that this Jesus is eternal. Unlike everything around us, Jesus did not "come to be", but rather, Jesus is, and always was.

The book of John starts with this phrase:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.¹

If John was talking about anything else, he would not have use the word "was", he would have used the Greek word "EGENETO" or "Became". He would have said "In the Beginning, the Word BECAME" or "The Word started to be".

¹ John 1:1, ESV

Instead, “In the beginning was the Word” is John’s way of saying, “Go back to the beginning of time, before anything was made; The Word already existed. That Word is God. God was around before anything was created. God was never created.”

There are people throughout time who fell into the false belief that since everything else was made, God had to be made as well. They may even say that Jesus Himself is a creation of the Father, and that Jesus did not exist before Christmas. If you have fallen into that trap, turn from that thinking and instead know instead that John, with these words, firmly puts that false idea of a “created-god” to bed. Jesus, The Word, is God, and Jesus is with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the beginning. God is eternal, and it’s right there at the beginning of John’s Gospel.

John continues the introduction to the Gospel by saying this:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made²

Remember, John’s Gospel begins with the phrase, “In the Beginning...” and at this point John puts Christ right at the center of creation. In fact John calls Christ the active force of creation.

If we recall the creation account in Genesis, we can remember the way that God created the heavens and the earth. God says “*Let there be light*” and there is light. Or “*Let there be an expanse*” or “*Let the waters gather together*”, and every time God speaks a word, that Word is effective.

In the Genesis account everything that is made is made with the Word of God. It is certainly no coincidence that John calls Jesus the “Word” and reminds us, as Genesis tells us, that God’s Word is the active force that creates everything.

² John 1:3, ESV

Hear that verse again with that in mind:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made³

This is all a fantastic reminder of God's work and glory in the creation of the universe, but where exactly does this tie into Christmas? Where does it tie into the birth of Jesus?

Again if you recall the Genesis account of creation, God forms the whole world and everything in it, but not too long after creation we learn that sin enters the world. All of creation, as a result of this sin, is plunged into the darkness that sin brings, and the curse of death that accompanies that sin.

So Jesus, the Word, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, has created a perfect world which then is overshadowed by death and darkness, but that isn't the end of the story. Even when the earth is cursed by sin, God also tells of the promise of the Messiah, The Christ, The Anointed One, who will come and return light and life to the world.

John's Gospel talks more about that promise. John writes this about Jesus:

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.⁴

Remember, in the beginning of this Gospel already, John called us to think all the way back to the beginning of creation, and to know that God was there already when everything was created. Then John reminds us that it was God who did the creation. Now in this section which you just heard, John writes about the source of all life and

³ John 1:3, ESV

⁴ John 1:4-5, ESV

light, and although darkness has entered the world, the light of Christ is far more brilliant!

It is at this point in the Gospel where John brings us into the Christmas season; into the season of rejoicing that Christ is born among us as God and man. Look around you to the Golds and Whites, and the shining Christmas lights; these are reminders of that Light entering the world on Christmas. These aren't just decorations, but reminders to reflect on what it means that Christ, the Light of the world has arrived!

The apostle John does this by talking about John the Baptizer, he says:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*⁵

It seems like a jarring shift; one moment the John the Apostle is writing about Jesus, and then he starts talking about John the Baptizer. But what John the Apostle is doing is going in order; he is walking us through the narrative. John wrote about the creation, and the fall, and now he connects Christ, the Word of God in Genesis, to Christ Jesus who is baptized in the Jordan river.

“Do you remember the light of the world I was talking about?” John is saying, “This is the same one that you saw at the Baptism, the same one that John the Baptizer prepared the way for. The promise of life in Genesis has come to earth in this God/Man Jesus!”

Again and again John continues to reinforce this connection between the eternal Word of God that created the earth, the Light of Life, and that Light which came into the world on Christmas.

⁵ John 1:6-8, ESV

He writes this:

*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*⁶

Through the rest of His earthly ministry, the Gospels record the accounts of Jesus interacting with people who rejected Him as God. Over and over again, however, the earth is given signs that God is precisely who He is.

In other Gospels we can read about the accounts leading up to Jesus' birth; the prophecies in the Old Testament pointing forward to it, and the miracles of Jesus in the New Testament saying again and again, "Jesus is God!"

In spite of all of these things, many people still found a way to reject God and the gift of life that He came to bring them.

While those who were in darkness rejected Christ to stay in that darkness, John talks also about those who believe in Him. He says:

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

This light and life that Jesus came to bring is something that He brought to us freely, and without any special quality of ourselves. God did not require that we find some way to save ourselves from the consequences of our own sin, but instead, God came down to earth to be one of us, to live alongside us, and ultimately to suffer and die for us, for you!

⁶ John 1:9-11, ESV

We Christians are adopted, as sons and daughters of God, through Baptism, which is the work of God. That is when we get a new name, when we get God's name, which replaces our own.

John makes it clear in that section that this is not something we deserve with our own bloodline, neither is it anything we can will or do that brings us into the family of God, but it is a right that is given to us through the Faith that we have in Him.

We didn't do anything or deserve in any way to be raised up to be brothers and sisters of Christ, but instead, Christ came down from heaven and humbled Himself to become man so He could be a brother to each of us.

That's what Christmas is all about, that God chose to adopt us, that God chose to humble Himself for our sake, that God came and dwelt among us when we had no business being anywhere near Him.

As John says:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ⁷

The Word, the eternal Word of God, not only created the whole universe, but redeemed it. He bought it back, paying the debt that everyone owed as a result of sin after darkness entered the world. The same Word of God that created all human life became human life in the manger on Christmas.

The same Word of God that promised a Savior when death entered the world was the same Word of God that would die that death for the world.

Today we celebrate the birth of Christ; the incarnation of the eternal Word of God who loved us so much that He came down from heaven Himself to save us.

⁷ John 1:14, ESV

We remember that the baby in a manger, born of Mary, was Emmanuel; God With Us, and is still physically with us every Divine Service in the Lord's Supper.

And ultimately we thank God that He would love us enough to become one of us so that as a result we become one with Him.

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Christmas Morning, Christmas II (Historic One-year series)
Psalm 2; Exodus 40:17-21, 34-38; Titus 3:4-7, John 1:1-14(15-18)

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Vicar Isaac Wirtz

SOLI DEO GLORIA