

The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord
25 December, Anno Domini 2022
St. John 1:1-14

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Redeemed of the Lord,

Merry Christmas!

Every single day, the Lord is hard at work creating – fearfully and wonderfully knitting together new life in the wombs of mothers all over the world. Sometimes this new life is, as it was meant to be, a product of the love of husband and wife, reflecting the very reason that God Himself created – the desire to bestow His love on another. Other times, the blessing of life is bestowed in midst of terrible violence and hatred. In such cases, we see the Lord overcoming such tremendous evil and creating life in the midst of death. And sometimes, that life is terribly and tragically short, reminding us again of what sin has unleashed upon creation. Praise be to God whose love has produced us, who desiring someone to bless and serve, has knit us together and who alone, can bring forth good where our reason can find none.

And as amazing as our creation is, even more amazing, more fearful and wonderful, is our redemption. That is what draws us together this morning. Not simply that we exist, but that we have been rescued from death, eternal death; that the punishment for our sin has been taken away from us, borne by the flesh of another who was born, who was even more fearfully and wonderfully knit together from the sinful flesh of the blessed Virgin.

The celebration of the incarnation of the Word provides us the opportunity to ponder again that the little baby that was wrapped in swaddling cloths, that Mary lovingly held in her arms and nursed and burped and bounced, is also the Word from the Father that sounded forth into the nothingness and brought forth stars, galaxies, planets, every seed bearing plant, diverse kinds of animals, and us – all from absolutely nothing. He who without Whom nothing was made that is made, He who has no beginning, subjected Himself to a beginning, being conceived on a particular day at a particular hour of that day. And then, nine months later, after growing and developing exactly as you and I did, He was born the exact same way you and I are born.

But this wasn't just to prove that He could. It wasn't an act of raw power. The joining of the divine to the human, the assumption of man into the divine, was a creative act of love unlike any other. The flesh that the Son of God, took from Mary, was the flesh of condemned sinners. God had given Adam and Eve life and they traded that life, that union with God, for physical and spiritual death. What God had made turned against Him and rather than being satisfied with God and what He freely gave, we sought after what had been forbidden, we sought to know and have more because we thought more equals better. But more meant less, a lot less. More meant separation from God, separation from life. More meant being God's enemy, subject to His divine wrath and standing under His judgment. More meant death.

But God wouldn't turn His back on us as we had on Him. He wouldn't abandon us to Satan's clutches even though we were the ones who made that choice. It didn't matter that we willingly chose to live in the darkness, to subject ourselves to decay and destruction. The Creator loved His creation with the purest and truest of love and therefore couldn't sit idly by while it was swept away into eternal destruction. Love created in the beginning and love would create again. Not by destroying and starting over, but by rescuing the first creation, by taking that which was dead and giving it new life.

And to do that God would give Himself. Life would enter death and consume it from the inside out, destroy it completely. And so God spoke as He did in the beginning and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Light that created light entered the darkness of sinful man as a man. In Jesus, man was recreated. The Second Adam stood against all the assaults and temptations of Satan and kept the Law of God perfectly as man. He was perfectly obedient, just as we should have been, making Him the only acceptable payment for our sins. He offered His innocence as full payment for our guilt. The One who is life snatched you out of the jaws of death and threw Himself in instead.

But death could never hold life. The eternal Light could not be snuffed out and so He rose again from the dead, shattering death's darkness forever. And He has shined His light on you, scattering the darkness of YOUR sin and death and recreated you, fresh and new – not because of anything you have said or done or decided, but because He loves you. He has given you new life in the waters of Holy Baptism, recreating you in His image, holy and righteous before God. He feeds and nourishes that new life by continuing to give you His own life as you

feast on the very same Body and Blood that once laid in the manger and hung on the cross.

That is the glory that we now behold. That is the glory of God that causes angels, archangels, the whole company of heaven, newborn babes, and old men to rejoice. It is why we rejoice and sing hymns of praise and glory to God in the highest. The Word became flesh and now dwells with us.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.