

CHRISTMAS DAY 2017

John 1:1-18.

**Hymns: 387, 302, 380, 630, 634, 367.**

**Introit: Psalm 2.**

P Why have the nations been restless,

**C and why do the peoples plot for no purpose?**

P The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together,

**C against the LORD and against His Anointed One, saying:**

P “Let us tear up their chains

**C and throw their ropes away from us!”**

P The One enthroned in heaven laughs.

**C The LORD ridicules them.**

P Then He speaks to them in His anger,

**C and terrifies them in His glowing anger, saying:**

P “Nevertheless, I Myself have consecrated

**C My King on Zion, My holy mountain.”**

P I shall proclaim the decree of the LORD: He has said to Me:

**C “You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.**

P Ask Me, that I may make the nations

**C Your inheritance and the ends of the earth Your property.**

P You will break them with an iron rod.

**C You will smash them to pieces like a vessel of pottery.”**

P Now therefore, you kings, act with insight!

**C Take advice, you judges of the earth!**

P Serve the LORD with fear,

**C and rejoice with trembling!**

P Fervently kiss the Son, that He may not become angry, and that you may not perish in your way!

**All: For His anger may blaze up in a short time. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!**

Collect: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 52:7-10.**

**Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12.**

**Gospel: John 1:1-18.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 1:1-18.

**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** Everything was made through Him, and not one thing that was made was made without Him. **4** In Him was life, and the Life was the Light of mankind. **5** The Light is shining in the dark, and the darkness has not understood it. **6** A man came, whom God sent, and whose name was John. **7** He came to testify, that is, to testify about the Light so that through Him everyone might believe. **8** He was not

the Light but came to witness about the Light. <sup>9</sup> The genuine Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and He made the world, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> However, to all who received Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God. <sup>13</sup> They have been born not of blood, or of an urge of the flesh, or of a husband's desire, but of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's only Son – He is full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John testified about Him when he cried out: "This was the One about whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has been before me, because He has been before me.'" <sup>16</sup> For from His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is God, who is in the lap of the Father, has made Him known."

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

What is the Word that has become flesh? If we humans have a word, it's something that we speak, or something that we think. But when God has a Word, it's a Person.

When we get enthusiastic we like to create things, but that takes a lot of planning and tools, and sometimes a headache! When God creates, - He uses the WORD. Through the WORD, all things were made, and without the WORD, nothing was ever made. So God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Somehow the act or content of speaking was the tool to create the entire universe. We on the other hand find it hard to even change a light bulb!

Even more than that, the WORD of creation was the SON of God, a being distinct yet also one with the Father and Spirit. The creative, powerful WORD is the only-begotten, without beginning or end.

Now this Word has become Man. The one without beginning assumes a beginning, by being conceived in the Blessed Virgin. She becomes the mother of the Son of God, even though He is ageless and infinite, before time was time.

The Word is life. All life comes from Him. The Word is light, because He is the Light of the world. In Creation and in Redemption, the Word creates all life and light. Only in His life and death and resurrection can there be any life at all for fallen humanity. - If anyone is to be enlightened by God, he can only be enlightened by the Word which is Christ.

There's too much here for our fragile brains. - Our limited, sinful intellects cannot grasp how a Word can be a Person, nor how a Word can take flesh. Yet we faithful believers confess what is beyond our understanding. We say what God has said, even though we cannot fully grasp it.

So we say, "The Word became flesh." - We also say, "and was made Man," in the Nicene Creed. We are privileged to say, "Christ, the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary." These are such powerful words for our humbled brains to think, let alone speak!

Such a fantastic wonder occurred in the manger that the heavens were amazed and the depths of hell shivered in fear. For on this day, there was a baby who was the eternal God.

We can imagine His chubby little fingers, so clumsy and weak. Yet this Baby is the all-powerful God who somehow remains above in heaven, filling all creation. Somehow, He is upholding the universe with His preserving power, at the same time that He gurgles and spits and wiggles.

So heaven rejoices and hell groans in fear. Now there is a Man who is God. He comes in weakness, not using His full power and glory as God. Yet God He is. He has not counted our earthly lives as beneath Him. He didn't avoid the dirtiness, the pain, or any of the shame of God acting like a weak man.

Consider that He was willing to be born. We might think that too lowly and disgusting a process for the High King of all kings, the Monarch of the universe. Yet the Lord of hosts didn't avoid this messiness. He became one of us as we are except for sin.

Think of the honour now heaped upon our human race. God has become our Brother, one of us. He didn't just come in human form or come in human disguise. No, He became one of us, forever a Man. He didn't take humanity for a little while. No, He became flesh for all eternity.

This is the terror for Satan and his hosts. The Word became flesh means that Christ will always be a human being. The Son of God has thrown His lot in with us.

He was like us, weak, struggling, and stumbling. Yet always He was the Word. Always the power was His to do whatever He wished. He didn't need to struggle. He didn't need to be weak. In Himself, He always was and always is the Omnipotent King, even as the Baby in the manger. Yet He didn't use His majestic glory.

So He came into the world that Christmas Day as a weakling. Mary or Joseph holds God in their hands. He doesn't move about under His own power. He must spend months learning how to walk. Why does He do it? Why not summon cherubim and ride upon them? Because He came to be like us.

This is His love for us. He wanted to redeem our lives, so He lived our life. He went through childbirth, teething, crawling, learning to speak. He who is the Word had to be taught words. He who created all language babbled. Why? To redeem everything that we are and do.

Cry out to the heavens in joy this Christmas Day, "The Son of God is our brother!" Now humanity has a new dignity. Once created in the image of God, we broke that image. Now the family of the human race has a new glory and greatness because one of us is Christ the Lord.

We were in darkness. But the Light of light has come to enlighten us. We were dead. But the Life of all the living has brought us to life. How? By speaking Himself. The Word speaks the Word and we are resurrected.

Our will had failed. Adam and Eve, as our representatives, failed in the garden. We each in our own lives have failed because we are their true children. Our first parents used their free will to fall into sin, and therefore plunged all the human race into sin and death. So we lost free will to choose God. Our will power became tainted by sin so that no one could choose to be born again.

But now we have this Name to believe in: the Word, the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. His Name is Wonderful. His Gospel gives us faith where our human power of decision could not. His powerful Word grabs hold of us and makes us His own.

That was why He took our flesh. He wanted to make us His own again. That was why He came as a Baby, filled with grace upon grace. His very existence was the gift of God to mankind. Every intention and

moment and thought and word and action He ever produced were for us. His was a perfect life as we cannot even imagine perfection.

The Word is the truth of God. The truth is this: You are sinners, but Christ has come in your human flesh to pay the price. He has come to be your life. And that's a life that never ends.

So, when we consider the Babe in Bethlehem, we must conclude that there is far too much contained in that manger for our fragile brains to grasp. The eternal God who fills the universe fit His essence and glory into a tiny Baby's body. He who is bigger than all creation, who made it everything by His power, entered His own creation to live within it, as one of its creatures. What glory and prize did He hope to win by this? Simply you. He looked upon us sinners with compassion and said, "I will suffer all that must be suffered. I will be one of them. I will be flesh."

So He became, and so He lived, and so He was born. And the angels sang and the demons trembled. All glory be to the Incarnate Word, who worked so mightily by becoming a little Baby. Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**  
**3rd Hymn; 380,**

## Prayer of the Church Christmas Day 25 December 2017

P To us a child is born, to us a son is given, let us offer praise, thanks and prayer to God the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

*Brief silence*

P For all who celebrate the incarnation, that the knowledge that their God reigns would cause them to lift up their voices and sing for joy, that they be always ready to tell others about the Word made flesh, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For all pastors, that God would work through their proclamation of Christ to bring the good news of happiness and salvation to all who hear them, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the nations of this world, that they be given a spirit of peace, that conflicts cease and that all see in the birth of Jesus the salvation of our God, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who suffer persecution for the sake of Christ, that they be kept firm in their faith as they bear witness to the light of the world, and that they never lose sight of their identity as children of God, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the destitute, those recovering from natural disaster and those who find themselves in want, that they receive the necessities for daily life, that the agencies who serve them receive generous support, and that those who serve and those who are served come to see God as the giver of daily bread, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who suffer sickness in mind or body, those who are homebound, those who are in nursing homes, *especially*; and all who have asked for our prayers, that God would grant them healing, peace, patience and faith that endures, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who commune today, that they receive the body and blood of Jesus worthily with faith in His bodily presence here in the Sacrament for them, and in His Word spoken, and that they depart having received grace upon grace from His fullness, let pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P In thanksgiving for all the people of God who have gone before us and now rest in His presence, that we, too, would be kept faithful until that day when He makes all things new, let us pray to the Lord,

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P Hear us, O Lord, for the sake of Your Son, the Word become flesh, the Saviour of the nations, Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God. **Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 630,**