

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 our sermon this morning is written in the book of John 1:1-18 which was our gospel reading before.

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. 9 The genuine Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and He made the world, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.

12 However, to all who received Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God. 13 They have been born not of blood, or of an urge of the flesh, or of a husband's desire, but of God. 14 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.

15 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.' 16 For from His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. 18 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 through Your truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

I don't know about you, but one of the things that impresses me is when someone uses relatively simple things to make something that is very sophisticated. For example: A simple thing like LEGO blocks, you can't get anything as uncomplicated as one of those. You can build something as simple as a wall, or, a whole City with streets, lights, traffic and people. Even something as complicated as a Movie! I can't begin to tell you all the things that they built out of those simple, little plastic blocks. The ability to use simple little things like plastic blocks to make sophisticated duplicates of famous landmarks and Movies impresses me.

The Gospel according to John is another thing that really impresses me because it uses simple words to proclaim some very profound theology. For example: Of the 224 words that make up today's Gospel, just over 200 of them are one syllable words. Less than ten of them have more than two syllables. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit worked through John's simple words to proclaim some very sophisticated theology.

John himself gives us the purpose for this writing near the end of his Gospel account: **Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.** [John 20:30–31] With these words, John proclaims that Jesus is The anointed one of God, He is God the Son, and there is a specific faith in Jesus that receives eternal life.

The beginning of this Gospel begins to fulfill this purpose with simple, elegant beauty. Here we learn that there is a Word that is more than just simple information. Here we learn that there is a Word that is a living, thinking being. Here we learn of an eternal, living Word that has come to live with us.

In the beginning was the Word ... (John 1:1) It's not an accident that the first words of this Gospel account are the same as the first words of Genesis. This special Word that John tells us about is eternal. In the beginning ... before anything was created ... this Word already existed. The only way to Be in the beginning is to be eternal. To be the only thing that existed at the beginning ... before anything is created ... is God.

Now, just in case this is not obvious, the proclamation continues: **"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."** Here the account begins to develop the idea that this Word is not alone as God. These first two verses inform us that this Word was with one person of God, He actually was the second person of God, and, in addition, He was with a third person of God. Here the text begins to show that God is three persons ... and this WORD is one of those persons. Since God does not change, if this WORD was GOD in the beginning, then He is still GOD today.

The proclamation then proceeds to tell us that this Word was intimately involved with the creative work of God. **"Everything was made through Him, and not one thing that was made was made without Him."** This verse informs us that this Word was totally involved in the creative process. In fact, it says it twice. **"Everything was made through Him,** really says it all, but just to emphasize the point, we also hear **and not one thing that was made was made without Him."**, the text powerfully drives home the point that when God created all things, He created them through this Word.

The next verse informs us that God not only created us through this Word, but He also maintains us through this Word. **4 In Him was life, and the Life was the Light of mankind"** This text teaches us that our very life is tied up in this Word. True life is in Him. Then, by way of this true life, He gives us the light of intellect, reason, and wisdom.

Next, we learn that this Word has an enemy. **5 The Light is shining in the dark,"** Darkness is not a thing. It's the absence of a thing. Darkness is the absence of light. If the Word, who is light is God, then Darkness is the absence of light ... the absence of the Word ... the absence of God. God creates...The Darkness destroys.

Yet, in revealing this enemy, there is great hope. **5 The Light is shining in the dark, and the darkness has not understood it. or "Overcome it."** Light is more powerful than dark. God is more powerful than evil. In the end, the light of the Word will overpower the darkness of destruction.

Now... John has told us about the Word ... that He is God with the two other persons of the Trinity ... that He is the source of life and thought ... that He is the light that drives out the darkness of evil. Now that John has told us all these things, he tells us that this Word ... this light, came into the world. **9 The genuine Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."**

As we learn about the Light coming into the world, John reminds us of how sad state of the world is. **"10 He was in the world, and He made the world, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him."** Because of the darkness of sin, the world, whose life was in Him, did not know Him. Even the Jews, who had the light of the written Word, rejected Him. He was a stranger to those who were created through Him.

Despite this general rejection, there were a few ... a remnant ... who received Him. **"12 However, to all who received Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God. 13 They have been born not of blood, or of an urge of the flesh, or of a husband's desire, but of God."** John makes it very clear that no human activity whatsoever can make one into a child of God. God and God alone comes to the sinner and converts that sinner into His child ... an adopted brother or sister of the Word and a child of Almighty God.

Now that John has told us about the Word ... Now that John has told us that the Word came into the world ... He now tells us how He came. **"14 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."** Here we learn that the eternal Word took on our human flesh. He took on our human flesh in order to dwell with us ... in order to be one of us. The eternal Word ... the Word who is God ... the Word through whom all things were created ... the Word through whom all things are maintained ... the Word who conquered the darkness of evil ... that Word loves us enough to become one of us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Word joins with a single human egg in the womb of the Virgin Mary so that God and man are now one Christ ... our brother ... our Saviour.

"¹ God has long ago spoken at many times and in many ways to our fathers by the prophets, ² but He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. He has made Him the Heir of all things, and through Him He has also made the universe." (Hebrews 1:1–2) God communicated His love to us in the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. It's by the flesh of this Word, that He conquers the darkness of sin and death. For it's the flesh of this Word that hung on the cross to purify you and me from the darkness of our sin. It's the flesh of this Word that rose from the dead to open the path to life for all who believe, and it's also this Word that comes to us on the altar in the bread and the wine in order to pour the forgiveness of sins down our throats as we eat His body and drink His blood at the altar.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That's what this day is all about. The eternal Word ... God ... now lives in human flesh. We celebrate the birth of a son to the Virgin Mary ... a son who is God with us. In that human flesh, Christ was born. In that human flesh, Christ died. In that human flesh, Christ rose. In that human flesh, Christ now reigns at God's right hand. In that same human flesh, Christ will come to judge the living and the dead.

On that Last Day, when we look at our judge, we shall see our Saviour ... our Saviour whose birth we celebrate on this day ... Jesus ... the God-man ... the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. On this day, we celebrate the birth of the one who gave His life that we might live and enjoy His presence **forevermore. Amen**

Prayer of the Church Christmas Day 25 December 2016

As each petition concludes with:.... By Your holy incarnation,
Your response shall be: Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief Silence

P Incarnate Word of God, in the joyous celebration of Your nativity, we have seen Your glory. Because of Your gracious visitation to comfort and redeem Your people by taking their sin upon Yourself, You have saved us from the unending sorrows of death and hell. Grant us a blessed Christmastide, sharing this joy with all those we encounter. - By Your holy incarnation,

C **Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.**

P Incarnate Word of God, in Your Holy Gospel we have seen Your glory. Bless the preaching of the Gospel from the altars and pulpits You have consecrated for the purpose of delivering Your gift of faith through the preaching of Your Word. Bless those called to preach and those called to hear, that the light of Your Word may continue to illumine the darkness of our world. Abide with those who suffer persecution for confessing its truth. Bless our congregations in the Quest for a new Pastor willing to take up your call here in our Parish. - By Your holy incarnation,

C **Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.**

P Incarnate Word of God, by Your Sacrament of Holy Baptism we have seen Your glory. Make all the baptized confident in the promise given to them in the waters of Baptism. Grant repentance to parents who have withheld the treasures of Baptism from their children. Give to all Your people hearts that love and welcome children. Continue to expand Your kingdom through this, to eternal life. - By Your holy incarnation,

C **Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.**

P Incarnate Word of God, in Your word of Absolution we have seen Your glory. Teach us to treasure Your gift of Absolution delivered to us from the mouths of the ministers You send. Continue by Your word of forgiveness to silence the accusations of the Devil. - By Your holy incarnation,

C **Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.**

P Incarnate Word of God, we pray for the Pastors of the AELC here in Australia and in the ULMA in America that they might be encouraged to declare the goodness of God to us, - By Your holy incarnation,

C **Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.**

P Incarnate Word of God, in Your Holy Supper we have seen Your glory. From Your humble entry into our world in the womb of the blessed Virgin to your first bed in a feeding trough, You set aside the honour You rightly deserve to bless us with Your presence. - As You now come to us humbly under the forms of bread and wine, bless

us with a right faith that we might worthily receive Your body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. - By Your holy incarnation,

C Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.

P Incarnate Word of God, in Your ongoing provision of daily bread we have seen Your glory. By Your Spirit, visit those who suffer: the sick, the sorrowing, the hospitalized, the poor, the destitute, the homeless, the unemployed, that they might find hope in You - By Your holy incarnation,

C Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.

P Incarnate Word of God, in Your crucifixion and resurrection we have seen Your glory. Give comfort to those who grieve the death of loved ones. Grant to all people a sure and certain hope in the resurrection of all the dead and eternal life for all believers in You on the day of Your return. Keep us steadfast and faithful until that day. - By Your holy incarnation,

P Have mercy on us, Lord Jesus.

P All these things and whatever else You know we need, grant us for Your sake, Lord Jesus, as You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C Amen.**