

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... 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” (John 1:1, 14).

Merry Christmas!

Christmas Day is certainly different from Christmas Eve. Last night, we heard about the nativity scene, the creche. We heard about Mary and Joseph. We heard about angels and shepherds. We heard about the Christ Child wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. This morning, we hear what *that* all means. This morning, we hear about the theology hiding behind the nativity scene – the creche: ***“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”*** (John 1:14a).

Theologically, verse 14 of our Gospel text presents to us the most concise Biblical statement of the Incarnation. Those first four words ***“the Word became flesh”*** expresses the reality that in the Incarnation God took upon Himself our humanity. It expresses that the infinite became finite. It expresses eternity entering time. It expresses the invisible became visible. It expresses the Creator entering His creation.

Before there was a world, a universe, there was God. And this very Person – the Second Person of the Trinity – was active to create *all* this. The very Creator of all things now puts on our flesh – our human flesh. God became one of us. At the same time, God does not change. God can’t change. This is so much to ponder. This is beyond our own thoughts and imagination. Just ponder this fact: God became a human being and yet, He never ceases to be God.

- 1 Of the Father’s love begotten
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see
Evermore and evermore. (*Of the Father’s Love Begotten*, LSB 384, stanza 1)

The Divinity took upon our humanity. The Second Person of the Trinity, who is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. Wow! God dwelt among us!

2 Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel! (*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, LSB 380, stanza 2)

God with us!

Of course, God had been with His people throughout their history, but this was different. Very different.

Before, God “tabernacled” among His people in *the* tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and then its more permanent replacement, the temple in Jerusalem. That was too, a remarkable thing. It was remarkable how God dwelt among unclean people to cleanse them and dwell among them. Yet, there at the temple, God assured His people of His glory. God assured His people of His holy presence. There, He atoned for their sins. There, He shared His holiness with them that they might be the holy people He called them to be.

But all that time, King Solomon, who was responsible in building the temple, believed that God could not be contained in the temple (1 Kings 8:27). Solomon believed that the temple, nor heaven, nor earth, could contain God.

Solomon was right. His temple could not contain God. So, God pitched His tent among us. Here in flesh and blood, the Word, the very Second Person of the Trinity, the very Son of God, dwells among us. A new temple, not made of stone or wood, but of His flesh. Now the fullness of the Deity dwells bodily in the flesh of Christ Jesus.

This is a Divine Mystery! The Word did not simply inhabit the flesh of Jesus, like a tent or a vehicle you step into and then step out of. The Word has become flesh in this mysterious union of true God and true man we call the Incarnation. This is a mystery we may not fully understand, but it's a mystery to be confessed.

But have you ever thought: Why would God exchange a permanent, lasting home for a fragile human body?

We do certainly live in a fallen world where things do not last. Just look all around. Everything dies or decays. Or it lasts long enough to be bulldozed for a "better" structure. Just look at sports stadiums and Las Vegas hotels. They are here one day and gone the next. Ironically, even Solomon's and Herod's temples – *that were one day seemingly indestructible* – were leveled.

You and I will die. The Psalmist writes: ***"You [God] sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. ... For all our days pass away under Your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away"*** (Psalm 90:5-6, 9-10).

The sentence of death lies heavy on our fallen human race as generations come and generations go, for we are by nature estranged from God by our sin, as we are corrupted to the core of our being ever since the Fall of Adam.

But then something changes. The sinless Son of God becomes Man. The Word became flesh – a weak, mortal flesh and blood, who three decades later would be hung lifeless on a cross. The Word became flesh so that He might bear our griefs, carry our sorrows, and be crushed under the weight of yours and my guilt. The sinless would die for the sinful. The Holy One would die for the unclean. The very Son of God would bear the full, divine wrath against your sin and mine, so that we – *by faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior* – would never face God's wrath ourselves!

For three days, the Word become flesh would be dead. But on that third day, that same Word become flesh rose to life – indestructible and immortal.

Certainly, heaven and earth would pass away, but not the Word made flesh for you!

All earthly temples, including Solomon's temple and Herod's after it would pass away. But not this Temple! The resurrected, glorified, Word made flesh Christ Jesus will not pass away. Jesus is more lasting than the strongest stone. There, in the Word become flesh Jesus Christ, our Lord, we see the only true and enduring sanctuary of God. Jesus is the place where God's glory dwells!

But here we are, some two thousand years later. Yes, the apostles and disciples then saw Jesus and His glory. What about us? Where is God's glory on this Christmas in 2025?

God is still with us. God still dwells with us. God is still tabernacling with us. But where is He?

Today, the Word become flesh's glory is veiled. He is hidden. But His glory, which is full of grace and truth comes to you and me still as the Word become flesh tabernacles among us – eternal and indestructible. For it was He who incorporated you into His body, the Church. By grace through faith in Christ alone, He has given you His own resurrection life!

And while God's glory is hidden, Jesus is very present with us. You see, it was His voice you heard forgiving your sins. You heard His proclaimed Word in the Scriptures and in this sermon. And in moments, He will again reveal Himself to you through His very Body and Blood under bread and wine. Through these Means of Grace – *His Word and His Sacraments* – the very Word become flesh Christ Jesus forgives and restores you, His beloved child.

On this Nativity of Our Lord, let us confess this Divine Mystery of the Word become flesh, God becoming man, so that we – *by faith in Him* – would have the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation. Merry Christmas! Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +