

Christmas Day

December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Pastor Matthew Ude

### True God Yet True Man Born to be Our Savior

**John 1:1-14** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. <sup>8</sup> He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup> That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Last night we heard how the angels sang at the birth of Christ. Mary gave birth to her Child and marveled at what had happened to her. The shepherds came eagerly peering over the manger, wondering what manner of child is this that angels should sing at his birth.

Now it is our turn to gather around the manger and find out what manner of being is inside. That is precisely what the first chapter of John's gospel is. It is an introduction to Jesus. It is an explanation of what manner of child He is.

#### Who is this Child? He is true God

If you want to make Saint Nicholas a part of your Christmas celebration this is the correct place to do it. Right here in John chapter 1:1. Saint Nicholas was at the council of Nicea. At the same council was a false teacher named Arius who was trying to convince everyone that Jesus was not the true God. It is said that Saint Nicholas slapped Arius in the face. Whether that is true or not, it is certain that Saint Nicholas was there at the council and was a forceful defender of the truth that John tells us here that Jesus is true God equal to the Father. So if you are going to have an image of Saint Nicholas you should get one of those post it notes that looks like a speaking bubble and write John 1:1 on it.

Here in the first three verses of John is a very vivid and precise explanation of Jesus deity.

Notice the succinct and complete explanation of Jesus deity. He is God but he is also with God. He is separate from the Father but also true God equal to the Father.

In verse two the NKJ says, "He was in the beginning . . ." A better translation would be, "This is the one who was in the beginning." Genesis chapter one tells us that God said "let us make man in our image." It was a topic of conversation for 1500 years, "what is this 'us?'" Who was with God in the beginning? John says here He is, here is the one who was with God. The mystery is revealed.

In verse three John shows us that He participated fully in all the acts of creation. Again Christ is not a created being. All things that were made were made through him. Thus Christ himself was not created but the creator.

### **Who is this child? Secondly, He is the one who came to earth**

Vanessa really likes to watch a lot of those nature shows about animals and fish. The other day they were talking about a bobbit worm. These worms can be up to 10 feet long, although they are usually closer to 3 feet. They have sharp claw like jaws. They burrow into the sand, and wait for prey. They can't see but instead smell for fish. They live in coral reefs some of the most beautiful places in the world. But they cannot see and cannot appreciate the beauty around them. Instead they lurk in the darkness.

Isn't this exactly how John is describing us? The light shone in the darkness but the darkness did not comprehend it. We are unable to appreciate who and what this child is. We cannot see the marvel that is there before our eyes. The eternal almighty God come into our world as one of us. We cannot appreciate it unless Christ opens our eyes.

Right away in verse one John speaks of the incarnation. Jesus is the Word, that is the messenger, the one who comes from God to tell us the things of God. Thus also in the Old Testament he is constantly referred to as the Angel of the Lord. The messenger, the One who comes from God to speak to us the thoughts and things of God

There was a man named John. This verse also speaks to us about the incarnation. This is real history. A lot of what John is saying here is very metaphysical. But John wants us to know this isn't just philosophy. This isn't just speculation about heavenly things. Instead this eternal God came in the form of a man and touched the earth. He was a real part of real history touching the lives of real people and still does.

This is the beauty of the incarnation that the eternal God came down and walked among us.

Look at the cover of your bulletin. Are the stars going in or out? My brother Nate commented to me last night that the stars are going out of the jar, thus God is creating the universe. I said no the stars are going into the Jar. The eternal God is coming down to become man. In either case it is a picture of Jesus, the eternal God who created all things even then stars and then came down and became man.

**But he did this for a reason. He became man in order to save us. And thus the third part, who is this child? Our Savior.**

These three things are intricately linked, Creation, Incarnation, and the Crucifixion. It was the creator who became man so that He could die for our salvation. In fact these three things are so intricately linked that the early church fathers thought they must have happened all on the same day. They calculated that Jesus crucifixion happened on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Thus that must also be the day the world was created and the day that Jesus was conceived. For this reason we celebrate Christ's birth on December 25<sup>th</sup> nine months after his conception. Now I don't know that all three things happened on the same day but I do know that Christ was born solely for this one purpose to be our savior.

Notice how clearly John teaches that this was not our choice. We cannot save ourselves.

The darkness did not receive him, the world did not know him ( even though he created it). Even his own people, the Israelites who had all the prophecies did not recognize him. All of scripture, all the prophecies, all the sacrifices and festivals were there to teach them to recognize the messiah when he came. But they did not receive Him.

But to those who believe He gave them the authority to be children of God. How did they receive this blessing? How did they come to faith?

Not of blood. Contrary to the way the world works God's kingdom isn't passed down father to son. Contrary to what the Jews thought being physical descendants of Abraham isn't a free pass into God's kingdom.

Not of the will of the flesh. "I've gotta to be true to myself." How many times have you heard that? "I have to find myself." "I have to do what makes me happy." The desire of the flesh will never lead to happiness in this earth or the next. Following our desires will not bring us salvation.

Not the will of men. Not the desire of the flesh nor the rational mind. Men can not choose to follow Christ. The rational mind and the desires of the flesh will always lead away from Christ and salvation.

It is only those "born of God." It is Jesus and Jesus alone who can save us. Only Jesus can bring us salvation and create faith in our hearts.

It is only Jesus the one who is both true God and true man who could save us.

He had to be true man in order to take our place.

He had to be true God in order to do it for all and do it perfectly.

**We beheld his glory – the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth**

This is the first verse in which John uses the first person (we). He could have used it back in verse six when he was talking about the John the Baptist. John the apostle was there with John the Baptist when he was a witness. But he saves it for here because this is what is important to him. That he saw

firsthand the glory of God. Not as a great burning white light or fire, but he saw it in Jesus' acts of love and teaching of truth. He spoke as no one else. He lived as no one else.

And so also will we, but not today. We also will see the glory as of the only begotten of the father, but not today.

There is a lot of pressure on Christmas to be this beautiful amazing, joyful day. That is a lot of pressure for one day. And there is no need. We have plenty of time.

Today we have only just met him. We have seen and heard what an amazing child this is, true God yet true man born to be our savior.

But we will continue to watch him. We will learn to see the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. We will continue this journey through Epiphany and Lent and Good Friday and Easter.

We don't have to only peak at the manger and then walk away. We can stay and watch him grow. Watch all the wonderful things He does for so many people. Watch all the lives He touches which His undeserved love. This is an amazing Child yes, but even more amazing is all the things He came to do for us.

**Amen**