

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Aurora, MN

January 3, 2021

Pastor Greg Anderson

PRELUDE

HEARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

LBW pg. 77

HYMN "Angels We Have Heard on High"

LBW # 71

Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains, And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains. Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria (Gloria, Gloria) in excelsis Deo

Oh, shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heavenly song? Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria (Gloria, Gloria) in excelsis Deo

GREETING

LBW pg. 78

KYRIE

LBW pg. 78

HYMN OF PRAISE "This is the Feast..."

LBW pg. 81

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 31:7-14

⁷For thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel." ⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹With

weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." ¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. ¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. ¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

R: The word of the Lord. C: *Thanks be to God.*

PSALM 147:12-20 (read responsively)

¹²Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

¹³**For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you.**

¹⁴He grants peace within your borders; he fills you with the finest of wheat.

¹⁵**He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.**

¹⁶He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes.

¹⁷**He hurls down hail like crumbs— who can stand before his cold?**

¹⁸He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.

¹⁹**He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel.**

²⁰He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his ordinances. Praise the LORD!

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:3-14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were

marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

R: The word of the Lord. ***C: Thanks be to God.***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

LBW pg. 83

C: Alleluia. Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

GOSPEL INTRODUCTION

LBW pg. 83

C: Glory to you O lord.

GOSPEL

John 1:[1-9]1-18

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.]

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¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Sermon 2nd Sunday of Christmas 2020 John 1.1-18

Grace to you and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Today we still celebrate Christmas! The gift of Christ coming to humanity to save the world! Today we look at the incredible Word that is made flesh in the beginning of the Gospel of John!

I have included in my message today my sermon outline and a wonderful commentary by Rev. James Howell from Luther Seminaries' Working Preacher web site.

Peace,

Pastor Greg

218-234-7217

"The Word made flesh"

The Wonder of Christmas day

- all can be right in the world!
- that family can come home!
- we can see a glimpse of the Kingdom to come!

I. "And the Word became flesh"

Today's text from John emphasizes the Word made flesh Greek Word: *Logos*

The Word who was in the beginning with God

The Word which created all things

The Word who is the light to all people

The Word, who was born to us on this Christmas day

Born to us in a lowly stable, and placed in a manger

Yes, the Word became flesh for us

II. Luther teaches us: An Interactive relationship

- That through belief, in Christ's birth for us, the Word cleanses us and gives us faith

-The birth of Christ takes our birth from us and absorbs it into his.

-We are then made pure and holy by his birth.

-If we believe this, we can then rejoice and glory in Christ's birth as if you yourself had been born of Mary.

-Wow, what an idea, that we can boast of the treasure that Mary is your rightful Mother, Christ is brother, and God your father.

-This we receive, when the birth of Christ becomes our own, and we receive that birth through belief and faith.

III. Luther continues: We are then called to works of love

"For if Christ has become your own through faith, and you have been cleansed by him and received your inheritance, without any personal merit, but alone through the love of God who gives to you as your own, the treasure and work of his son; it follows that you will do good works by doing to your neighbor as Christ has done for you."

IV. Saturated by the love of God

-This then is the love of God that saturates my heart with blessings,

for I was a person stuck in my own self centeredness.

-I had to do it my way. I had to be right. This God thing must be a joke.

-But through the faith of parents, friends, baptism, God grabbed a hold of my heart.

-I was brought to faith. Brought to a realization that Christ was born and died for me, and this is the love that I am now called to share.

V. Yes, and the Word became flesh

That is what this day is about!

About the glorious gifts of our God

About the wondrous proclamation of a savior born to the world

About the gift of salvation given to us for free

About the Word showering us with his blessing, through the birth of a little child.

Amen

James Howell

Senior Pastor

Myers Park United Methodist Church

Charlotte, N.C.

Commentary on John 1:1-18

Words matter. In our culture, where words are cheap, or not to be weighed carefully, or that are seized upon as evidence of ideological wrongness, words matter.

We know because God created everything, us included, by simply speaking. In Genesis 1 and clearly in the background/foreground of John 1, God creates the universe(s) by simply speaking. "Let it be." And it comes to be.

John 1 reminds us of the time when, as I have envisioned it, "God was young." God has always been—but if we think of God as old, God was young when God spoke at Creation. Before there was anything at all, God, being fully God and with no need for anything else, spoke in love. Love speaks. Love is not quiet. Love cannot keep silent. The love within God the Trinity (can we preach on this without getting diverted into trying to explain the Trinity to skeptics?) overflowed and could not help itself. God made a world, a stupendous universe, and tender, small things like the flower in your yard, a snowflake, a child tottering by, and your own visage in the mirror.

John 1, we have to notice, just decades after Jesus the man lived and died, speaks of Jesus in sumptuous, startling, annihilating, contested terms. George Lindbeck, in his amazing book, *The Nature of Doctrine*, speaks of "Christological maximalism." We cannot say enough fawning, extravagant, eloquent things about God in Christ.

The light in the darkness image invites the preacher to do peculiar things in preparing a sermon. I go outside, in the dark. I light a candle, gaze at the stars. I read this text with a flashlight. What is this light in the darkness? Doesn't even a little bit of light, a flickering candle, banish the darkness?

Our text is heartbreaking. The puzzle, the tragedy—that God was in "the world made through him, but the world knew him not" (verse 10). "He came to his home, and his own people received him not" (verse 11). Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision, said "Let our hearts be broken by the things that break the heart of God." We need go no further than this week's text. God made the world. But the world did not recognize, know, or welcome the very one to whom it owed its existence. We can blame the world. But what is that in God's own heart? If we want to ponder what grace is about, it is right here.

Jesus was born "not of blood" (verse 13). And yet, there was blood. I continue, after Christmas, to be struck by Rachel Marie Stone's reflection on what Jesus being born "of blood" was for Mary:

"A girl was in labor with God. She groaned and sweated and arched her back, crying out for her deliverance and finally delivering God, God's head pressing on her cervix, emerging from her vagina, perhaps tearing her flesh a little; God the Son, her Son, covered in vernix and blood, the infant God's first breath the close air of crowded quarters ... God the Son, her Son, pressed to her bare breast ... God the Son, her Son, drank deeply from his mother. Drink, my beloved. This is my body, broken for you."

Jesus, God in the flesh, was born "not of blood"—but there had to have been lots of blood!—for you. That is the glory, not the triumphant regal poses from medieval art. I wonder odd things—like did Mary have any

postpartum depression? Was Joseph as attentive as in the paintings and pageants? Was Jesus colicky in his first weeks?

John the Baptist is in John's poetic opening as in Luke's nativity narrative. He is always in the Christmas stories—but never in pageants, Christmas picture books, or any narrative retellings of Jesus' birth. No wonder: he is hairy, maybe a bit unsavory, like a survivalist, hollering "Repent!" like a street preacher. Did he holler? Perhaps his tone was more plaintive, pleading, almost tearful, so loving: Please, repent. Advent was to have been a season of repentance, of "prepare him room," and Lent is coming. Christmas perhaps should be not just joy but also mortification. God has come down to earth. Nothing could possibly be the same.

John the Baptist, despite his evident fame and popularity, was forever deferring to Jesus. Karl Barth, rather famously, kept a print of the Matthias von Grünewald painting of the crucifixion in his office. John the Baptist, anachronistically, but theologically on target, is standing at the foot of the cross, pointing up at Jesus with a bony, crooked finger. Barth often said, "I want to be that finger." Every preacher's ambition is right there. The question is: can we trust ourselves simply to point to Jesus?

As I wrote in *The Beauty of the Word*, so many sermons are not about God or Jesus at all. They are about us, our faith, our struggles, our prayer, our serving, our sin, our hope. But the Scriptural witness is primarily about God, and Jesus. Various Bible stories have no moral, no takeaway. The Transfiguration? The story is about the glory of Jesus. Ours is to be like the disciples, falling on our faces in awe. The Temptation? It is now "How to overcome temptation the way Jesus did." Not one of us would survive the devil's assault for a minute. Jesus did what we could never do. And do we are in awe of him.

John 1 is a symphony, a poem, a painting, an opera, a whisper, a shouted declamation that Jesus is far more amazing than you had ever imagined. Light, preceding Creation, the Word, the cause, reason and purpose of all things, banishing the darkness. Ours is to be in awe, to shiver in reverie, to be "lost in wonder, love and praise." And then, like John the Baptist and Karl Barth, simply to point. The preacher is the docent in the museum, leading parishioners to the big picture of Jesus. You point, you say *Wow*, and they do not even notice you any longer.

HYMN

"Lo, How a Rose Is growing"

LBW # 58

Lo, how a rose is growing, a bloom of finest grace; the prophets had for-told it: a branch of Jesse's race would bear one perfect flower, here in the cold of winter and darkest midnight hour.

The rose of which I'm singing Isaiah had for-told. He came to us through Mary who sheltered him from cold. Through god's eternal will this child to us was given at midnight calm and chill.

APOSTLES' CREED

We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated

at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Hear us, O God. **C: *Your mercy is great.***

THE PEACE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

OFFERING PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

LBW pg. 91

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

LBW pg. 95

SENDING HYMN

The Bells of Christmas

LBW # 62

1 The bells of Christmas chime once more; the heavenly guest is at the door. He comes to earthly dwellings still with new year gifts of peace, good will.

2 This world, though wide and far outspread, Could scarcely find for you a bed. Your cradle was a manger stall, No pearl nor silk nor kingly hall.

DISMISSAL

LBW pg. 95

Prayer Concerns

Lorna Kallio, Charlotte and Ken Carlson, Marie Anderson, Louise Ellingson, Glorene Clark, Herb Moore, Bill Utley, Bob Kallio, Marilyn Koschak, Susan (Paula Skelton's sister), Tom Lehtinen, Ruby Okstad (218-749-2866)

Make someone's day ☺~ We have many members of our church family in nursing homes and Assisted Living Facilities, and due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, they can't have visitors. We also all are just staying home more and don't have the social interaction that we used to. So please take a moment, pick up the phone, send a card or note and brighten someone's day.