

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sins for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint John the first chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

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 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ That was the

true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ 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.

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Merry Christmas! For what I pray is our first of many Christmases together, beloved friends in Christ, Merry Christmas!

How has your Christmas morning been so far? Some of us have spent time this morning with

family and friends opening presents. Some of us have spent the morning just waking up and getting ready for a big day. Some of us... well for some of us Christmas is not the most happy time of the year.

Yet, regardless of how our Christmas has been so far, I pray that through the Word of God each and every one of us is strengthened and edified. I pray that we can take time out of our busy schedules of presents and family and television, and take some time for our Savior. Our Savior, whose birth we celebrate this day, who came into this world to save us from all of our sins.

And though Christ came into this world as a child, He has given to you the greatest present of all, He has given you the ability, nay the right, to become a *child of God*.

So wait, a little baby is granting me the ability, the right to become a child of God? That doesn't make a whole lot of sense. I mean even if it is Jesus, didn't He have to grow up a little first before He could start handing out blessings and all? Well, did He?

Please remember that when we are talking about Jesus Christ, though He was born on Christmas morning, though He was born of Mary, though He had fingers and toes and flesh, He is still God. We confess just as much whenever we state the Athanasian Creed, you know the long one, we say, "Furthermore it is necessary for everlasting salvation that one also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man." This too is attested in Saint Paul's epistle to the Roman Christians (9:5), "of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen." So though He was born, though He spent time as a child, though just like each of us He did grow up, from before He was conceived in the womb of Mary, Jesus was and is God.

Even John in our text makes an allusion to this, "and the word became flesh and dwelt among us." The very Son of God, God Himself, took

on human flesh and dwelt among us. Wow, even if we take nothing else away from the sermon today, let us always remember that Jesus Christ, who is God eternally, took on human flesh and made His dwelling among us. He lived among the people of this world. He was, crassly speaking, one of us... but thank God that He was not completely like us.

As John tells us, and as each and every one of us knows, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” And is this not still the case to this very day? Though Jesus Christ was born, though He had human flesh, though He grew up... still people reject this notion and they reject Jesus Christ. And the sad thing is that we cannot just point the finger outside of the church at “those people” when, if we’re being honest, we need to point the finger at ourselves.

Oh come on pastor, I don’t deny that Jesus was born and lived and died. Oh don’t you? Have you ever sinned? Well sure pastor, but I’m not

denying Jesus’ life and death... And actually that is exactly what we are doing when we sin. When we sin, and boy do we sin a lot, we are denying God’s Word. Just as John said, “though he came to His own, His own did not receive Him.” Though Christ came as a child... it is hard to see Him that way. So often we see Jesus as either man or God, but it is difficult to see Him as both.

But He was a human and lived a decent life... so goes one argument for Christ. But if we ignore His divine nature, we are ignoring God, we are ignoring the true Christ.

Okay, so He was God who was only and always God... so goes another argument for Christ. But if we ignore His human nature, we are ignoring the true Christ.

Whenever we view Christ as anything but the perfect and holy God-man, we are denying Him. Though He was laying in a manger, He was the God-man who came to this world to redeem all of mankind. Though He hung on a cross He was still the God-man who came to

redeem all of mankind. Though He died... He was still the God-man. It can be very difficult, at times, for us to see Jesus as He truly is, the God-man who came to save us from all of our sins.

However, on this Christmas morning as we peer into the stable we need to recognize that we are peering in on the most High God... though He appears to us as a child, this is God that we are seeing and none other.

And when we view Him as our God-man, as our redeemer, as our Savior... well John tells us that it is then that we are considered to be the children of God. John says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." When, by faith, we receive Jesus Christ as our God-man, as our redeemer, then we have the right to become the children of God... and yes, a little baby gave us that right.

We cannot look at the manger and think, "oh well, in a couple of years He will be ready to share the Gospel message that's when His role really counts." No, as that baby lie there in the manger, He was the God of the entire universe in the flesh. He was the second person of the Trinity who is God overall. And that baby, when he was born, gave us the right to become the children of God.

Children who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man... You see, as we peer into this manger, it is not up to us to choose to believe in Jesus It is not up to our great lineage. it is not up to our parents or grandparents. When we peer into this manger and we see the infinite God lying and cooing, when God opens our hearts... well then we have the right to become the children of God because God chose us to be His children... and I cannot think of a better Christmas present.

So I wonder when is your Christmas? I know that normally we celebrate Christmas as the day that Jesus was born... but what if we took a

lesson from this text and also considered when we became the children of God. Now I know for most of us this happened as a small child when our parents had us baptized and thus we do not remember the date... but actually many of us do. The day that we were baptized and God placed in us His Holy Spirit... the day that we became children of God... the day that God chose us as His child... the day that faith was worked in our heart... well isn't that sort of our own personal Christmas?

Dear friends in Christ, Merry Christmas. May you be blessed on the day that we come together to celebrate the birth of our dear Savior, Jesus Christ. His birth is the beginning of a long and arduous road that He trod for us. He grew up into a man who would be rejected by family and friends. He would be beaten and mocked. He would be hung on a cross for all of our sins. He would die for us... and He would rise for us. So much happened to Jesus during His life and today is the day that we celebrate the beginning of that earthly life.

It seems only fitting to close this sermon with the words of John, which is the appointed Gospel lesson for the historical Christmas Day service: "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ 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."

Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, came into the world and made His dwelling among us. He did this, so that those who would receive Him are now able to be called the Sons of God... sons not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh... but of God.

Thank God for that baby that lies in the manger.
Thank God that the baby will grow up and live
and die for our many sins. And thank God for
sending His Son, to take on human flesh, so
that we might come and receive Him through
faith and so become the sons of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.