

INI Hymns ,  
Christmas Day

**John 1:14**

Sermon 22-05  
12/25/21

*“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.”*

**Dear Fellow Redeemed** in the Christ child, who became flesh for you. Grace and peace to you.

Does Christmas have the same excitement and delight for you as it did when you were a child? The excitement of Christmas changes as we get older, doesn't it? When we were little and had few responsibilities, Christmas was all excitement and wonder. The bright decorations brought joy and glee as they sparkled in our eyes. Decorating the tree was almost like meeting an old friend. “Oh, I remember that one!” All the special treats and the presents gathering under the tree. Then on Christmas Eve the nervousness and excitement reaches a climax with the Christmas Eve service. It's such a relief when you have said your last line. Then comes the fun of opening the presents.

As we grow older, much of that childhood excitement begins to fade. Christmas can become more of an exhausting rush of rushing around and frantic trying to get things done. But then when you have your own children, there is a new excitement in seeing it all new again through the eyes of your children. Seeing their joy gives you joy.

In old age as we experience more pains and losses in life, the joy and excitement of Christmas turns to a more somber reminiscing of better times gone by which can accentuate the loneliness. How can you enjoy Christmas when those people you especially love and hold dear are no longer with you? You can see why many people say that Christmas is meant for children. It really seems that way.

Thinking about Christmas in this way reminds me of God's words to the Jews in Zechariah when they asked, “Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?” God answered with another question, “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves?” Zech. 7:3-6. We should ask ourselves the same Question regarding our Christmas celebration. Is it really done for God or just for ourselves?

If the excitement of Christmas has become just about the excitement of the celebration, or if you think Christmas is meant for children, then it's time to refocus on what Christmas really is and let God fill our hearts and not just the excitement of the celebration. That is what we want to do this morning. Whatever your age, whatever your excitement level, let's focus on the wonder and joy described in our text.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” That is such an incredible statement. The first four verses of this chapter introduce us to the Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 1:1-4 Yes, this Word is the Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, the source of all light and life.

Now this eternal Word became flesh. That is the miracle and the marvel of the incarnation - God became man. He didn't just come in the form of a man, as He did on a number of occasions in the Old Testament. He “became flesh,” He became a real human being.

Think about Mary dealing with that realization. After all the chaos and uncertainty of getting to Bethlehem and settling in to the stable; after the frenzy and pain of giving birth; Mary held her first born son. She gazed into His eyes and touched his little nose and mouth. She was looking at **the Face of God**. Suddenly everything changed. All the fear and frustration melted away as she held her baby and gazed into His eyes. Nothing else mattered now.

No one had ever seen God at any time. People have often tried to picture God and many of those images depict God as an angry, vengeful God. Yet Mary was looking into God's eyes and seeing the Face of God and it was beautiful. It was soft and tender, sweet and adorable. Isn't this a "Great and Mighty Wonder," as we sang in the hymn? In Jesus we too can **See the Face of God**.

Do you sometimes picture God as frowning at you with an angry scowl? Then look again at this verse. "The Word became flesh, And dwelt among us!" Would God come to live with us, would He become one of us so that He can save us and dwell with us, if He hated us or was angry with us? Jesus came to live among us. Think about that in the context of the Christmas story.

We tend to romanticize the whole Christmas story. Even Mary giving birth to her first child in a stable we tend to picture as a wonderful setting. Most artists rendition of that scene have a warm glow, and Mary and Joseph, with their hair all neatly groomed have a peaceful look of wonder on their faces as they look at the baby Jesus. That is probably not a very realistic picture. We talked earlier in Advent about all the real life struggles and hardships, the fear and uncertainty that Mary and Joseph went through just to get to this point. There was the loneliness and isolation of being ostracized and rejected by many people, possibly even her own family because of her premarital pregnancy. Then there was that very unexpected and difficult journey to Bethlehem. What horrible timing! Then they got there and there was no place to stay. The prospect of giving birth to her first child in a barn must have been frightening.

The point is, this is real life. Life in this world gets messy! It's full of dirt and grime; sorrow and suffering, unexpected and unwelcome surprises and anxiety. Life is full of troubles and uncertainty. Yet Jesus, the eternal Word, came to dwell among us. He came to live in this messy world of sin. He came to experience the chaos and grime. He came to endure hunger and sweltering heat. He came to endure the pimples and awkwardness of puberty and the teen years. He came to endure the cruel words and actions of friends and neighbors. He came to live with us in the midst of our real life mess.

Would God do that if He was an angry God who wanted to punish us for our sins? This means two important things. He came to bare our griefs and carry our sorrows. Is. 53. All the suffering of life is the result of sin. Jesus endured the pains and sorrows of life in order to save us from all those painful effects of sin.

It also means that He can understand what our life is like. He knows what we are going through because He has faced all the same things we face. Jesus is not out of touch with our reality. He knows what life is like and He is with us in the midst of it all.

Sometimes people wonder, does God care when we are sad? Just look at Jesus coming to the widow who just lost her only son. "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother." Luke 7:13-15.

Does God know when we are afraid? Think about how Jesus saw His disciples out on

the sea of Galilee in the storm and terrified for their life. What did He do? He walked out on the water to help his friends. He said “fear not” to calm their fearful troubled heart, and then He calmed the storm.

More importantly, does God know and understand when we are wracked with guilt? Doesn't God look with anger when He sees our sin? Think about how Jesus dealt with the woman who had been caught in adultery and dragged mercilessly through the streets to the temple. The Priests and Pharisees talked of stoning her to death. Jesus looks with compassion, sends away her accusers and says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” Jesus comes to remove our sin and heal our guilty heart.

That is **The Face of God** which we are able to see in Jesus. It is a face that looks with love and kindness. Jesus dwelt among us. He knows, He cares and He saves. And that's where we see His Glory as the rest of our text says. “And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” That is the true joy and wonder of Christmas. It is seeing His Glory.

The disciples saw the glory of His power in all the miracles He performed. But that's not what the Apostle John highlights. The crowning feature of His glory is that He is “full of grace and truth.” A newborn is sweet and adorable, but when they get to be about four months old, they really start to get cute and begin to really look back at their mom and dad and react. They look at their mother with adoring, loving eyes and smile. There's really nothing more heartwarming than seeing your baby smile at you. That is the real joy of Christmas. Because Jesus came to dwell among us and save us, that is what God does when He looks at us. He looks at us and smiles. God tells you that every Sunday when the benediction is proclaimed. “The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious.” What does it mean when God makes His face shine upon you? A shining face is a smiling face. He looks at you with love and happiness. That is because when He looks at you, He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son that has been given to you. For when you were baptized into Christ you put on Christ.

So when your life is filled with troubles and sorrows, uncertainties and fears, then remember God entered our mess and sorrow. He understands what life is like and has compassion. When your heart is full of guilt and remorse, then remember that Jesus came to dwell among us and took all that guilt of our sin upon Himself and therefore we can see God's face and He is smiling at us. He pours out His grace and truth. And now we too can see His glory which is full of grace and truth.

Everything changed for us when we can **see the Face of God** and see that He is smiling at us. Any doubt that God loves us and cares for us disappeared the night God's Son was wrapped in swaddling clothes. We can no longer see our troubles as signs that God has forsaken us or doesn't care about us, for God came into the mess of this world to bear it for us. We can now live our whole life, seeing the face of God and that makes us smile.

Amen.