

The Word

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Merry Christmas! I love saying that. Don't you? Merry Christmas! My all-time favorite Christmas Hymn is "O Come All Ye Faithful." To me that is the quintessential Christmas Hymn. It has the refrain "O come let us adore Him" meaning to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. And that, of course, is the point of the Sunday service, and really every service public and private. We are to worship the Lord. The verse I like best states, "Yea Lord we greet thee. Born this happy morning. Jesus to thee be all glory given. Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing." And the reason that I like it so much has a lot to do with the Gospel reading for today from John 1.

John 1:1 is one of the memory verses for the confirmation class. And it goes along with Genesis 1:1. And both talk about baseball, isn't that great?! They both say, "In the big inning." Both are 'grand slam' verses. But seriously, they are related. Genesis 1:1 states that, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The word translated "Word" is the Greek word *logos* meaning divine wisdom, reason, logic, knowledge and understanding. It was a word that his readers would have understood. But he uses this term familiar to his audience to explain about whom they did not understand. John is using this term to mean Jesus Christ, which we will see as we read further.

Verse two, "He was in the beginning with God." Now this verse clarifies what John already said. The Word was with God, the Word was God (verse 1), and so that there is no doubt, the Word was in the beginning with God. The Word did not precede God, which would allow for a polytheistic view. They are one, leading to a monotheistic view. This is consistent with the *shema* found in Deuteronomy 6:4, which states, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"

Incidentally, this is also consistent with Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17.

"Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, **2** even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. **3** This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. **4** I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. **5** Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. **11** I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

John continues in 1:3, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." The Word, Jesus Christ, was present at

creation. When Genesis says that God created the heavens and the earth, it means that God the Father created, God the Son created, and God the Holy Spirit created. All three created. Three persons of the Triune God. Three persons, but of the same being. This is what is in the Creed of St. Athanasius, as I've preached about before.

Verse 4, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." This echoes what Jesus said about Himself in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." So, not only is Jesus the Word, the source of our wisdom and understanding and knowledge, but He is also the source of life and light. What does light do? Light helps us to see. Without light, there would be no life. Scientists typically state that there would be no life apart from the sun s-u-n but we would state that there would be no life without the Son of God s-o-n, Jesus Christ. We would not have life if not for Jesus. We would not see if not for Jesus. We would not know anything if not for Jesus Christ.

Verse 5, "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." The light of Christ is not comprehended by those who are of the darkness. They just do not understand. 1 Corinthians 1:18 states, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing"

John continues, "**9** There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. **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 those who were His own did not receive Him." Again, the worldly did not know Him, nor understand Him and who He is. Even the Jews, His own people, did not understand who He is. Many just wanted Him to overthrow the Romans. They didn't get that He came to give His life as a ransom for many. And so they missed Him when He was right there with them. Now, many did repent of that and come to faith after He ascended into heaven. But He was not popular when He was on earth.

Even today there are many that do not receive Him into their lives. They do not understand who He is. They do not understand what He came here to do. They do not recognize their need for Him.

Verse 12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even 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." What is John talking about? He is talking about being born again, which Jesus talks about with Nicodemis in John 3. Receive Christ as Savior and Lord and become a child of God. Adopted into His family, born again into the family of God. That doesn't happen when we act according to the flesh. That happens when we are determined to walk according to the Spirit.

Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Here we have the first indication that Jesus is the Word. The Word, God the Son, became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a bondservant, Paul told the Philippians (Phil 2:7). The Word, Jesus, knows all about being human. He knows the full range of human emotion and understanding personally because he took on flesh. And he shows us the Father, as He said to

Philip in John 14 and as is stated in John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

Jesus, the Word of the Father. Now in flesh appearing. For what purpose? Redemption. Verses 16-17, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Grace is God's favor towards us; unearned and undeserved.

By the Law given through Moses we are all guilty of sin against God. And that is true regardless of what we believe. On our own we are guilty. Not one of us deserves salvation. Not one of us earns salvation. There is nothing that we can do to earn it. Salvation is a gift and it is free, to us. It cost Jesus His life. That is why He came. We cannot fulfill the Law. But Jesus did. We who believe and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord no longer stand on our own. Christ is with us.

I preached this before, but it is like two books with dust covers on them. One is all about our life, and the other is about what Christ has done. When we accept Christ the dust covers are switched so that Christ covers us and takes our sins to the cross. Because of Him we can stand before God.

Christmas is wonderful. But Christmas loses its significance without Good Friday and Easter. You've heard us say this here a lot, and it is not original to us. Christians have believed this since the beginning of the Church. Christmas is about the birth of Christ. But Christ fulfilled His mission to bring us salvation. That was accomplished on the cross on Good Friday. And He rose from the dead winning for us everlasting life. Nobody else has ever done that. No religion teaches this. And remember, Christianity is about relationship with Christ, the Word of the Father; through whom all things were made, and through whom all things are being made new.

We too were born. And God has a plan for us, a mission for us to fulfill. Mostly that mission is to know Him and to make Him known to others. Jesus Christ fulfilled His mission, and arms us with the truth, and gives us the grace to fulfill the mission that He has for us. We do not walk alone. We have been made new by Christ and not left on our own, but Christ goes with us.

Yea Lord we do indeed greet thee. Born this happy morning; we remember the blessed day of your birth. Jesus to thee be all glory given; for the wonderful gift of salvation. You are the Word of the Father who took on our flesh. May we remember to remain in relationship with You, knowing that it is because of you that we can be saved and receive eternal life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!