

God Speaks to Us

St. Mark Lutheran
Christmas Day

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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 was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-5; 9-14

May the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love be yours today from God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, we celebrate Christmas. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, the day "the Word became flesh". Jesus came down from heaven and took on our flesh and blood to be a human being as human beings were meant to be.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us more about him. It says, "He is the radiance of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." Did you hear that correctly? He upholds not just the world, but the universe, by the word of his power. We are talking about Jesus here.

The one thing we must be sure about is this: this is no ordinary man. John says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then in verse 14 he tells us the greatest story of the ages: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."

It is through this Word that became flesh that God created the world and redeemed us. When God speaks, things are made and things happen. This same Word has been creative and redemptive throughout history. The first two verses of Hebrews 1 tell us, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our Fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

Now we have to be careful about something. Satan delights in confusing people. There are many groups who talk about Jesus and say nice things about Jesus, who don't believe all of what the Bible has to say about Jesus. They may say that God sent him; they may say that he had a special mission; some of them

may even say that he died on a cross, but if you pin them down, you will find that they stop short of saying that he is God. Many of them even claim to be Christian, but they deny one of the basic teachings about Jesus in the Holy Scriptures. I can name you at least three religious groups who meet in buildings within five miles of this church and who deny that Jesus is God and equal to God.

There is an abundance of evidence in the Holy Scriptures that Jesus is both God and man, and we dare not let anyone confuse us about that. We have several proofs in our readings today. Let's summarize them: 1) "He was in the beginning with God"; 2) "The Word was God...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; 3) "...in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...through whom also he created the world"; 4) "He is the radiance of God and the exact imprint of his nature...and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." Add to that that Jesus told the disciples "...he who has seen me has seen the Father" and that both men and angels worshipped him, and you should have no room for doubt. No one should be worshipping anyone but God.

"The Word became flesh" to redeem by his word what he had created by his word. When God speaks, things happen. Jesus said of his words, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63).

For whatever reason, in his wisdom, God simply decided that the way he was going to do things was through words. That's the way he set up the world to work, through speaking his words. In, Genesis he spoke and said, "Let there be light, and there was light." God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds. And it was so." And so on. He brought about all of his creation at the beginning by speaking. That's his way of getting things done.

Then, for thousands of years God spoke to his creation through his prophets. But what they said, or wrote, were God's words, not the words of man. The Apostle Peter reinforces this understanding when he writes in 2 Peter 1, "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." God saw to it that his words were written down and preserved so that we might have his guidance through our lives and be aware of how he has provided for our salvation from our sins.

Then the time came when Jesus Christ took on flesh and entered in a visible way into human history. That's what we are celebrating today. God spoke through those days by his Son. Jesus himself said something really interesting about his words. He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Matthew 24:35) Because of their importance, his words were preserved for us also. The Apostle John writes, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30)

Hopefully you know most of the rest of the story. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies written about a Messiah to come in the Old Testament. His disciples testify that he was without sin. He lived a perfect life in our stead. He died on the cross, and his sacrifice there was accepted by God the Father as payment for our sins. As he and the Holy Scriptures predicted, he was raised from the dead on the third day. Forty days later he ascended into heaven, leaving many witnesses in his stead.

Our reading from Hebrews tells us, "After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he inherited is more excellent than theirs." (Hebrews 1:3) He said, and the Holy Scriptures record, that he is coming again, on the Great Day of the Lord, when he will bring about the separation of the believers and the non-believers and set all things right again.

God is still speaking to us today through his ministry and through his priesthood of all believers. Pastors are called and ordained to speak about Jesus. Christians are called to speak the Christmas message to family and friends and anybody else who will listen.

The amazing thing is God's Word is still living and active. It is still changing hearts and minds and guiding people. A young businessman was rushed to the hospital in serious condition, where the doctors told him that he might not survive. He was not a religious man, but prior to the serious accident he had just had, he had heard the song "God Will Take Care of You" on his radio. That came to mind, and he tried saying a prayer, and suddenly had a feeling of hope. It was Sunday morning, almost Christmas Day, and down the hall of the hospital he was in, he heard a group of nurses singing at a chapel service. He struggled to get out of bed and into a wheel chair and wheeled himself down the hall and into the room. There he heard the message of Jesus Christ for the first time ever, and by the power of the Holy Spirit understood it and believed. He recovered from his injuries and remained faithful to Christ the rest of his life. You may have seen his name in Mentor, at the Great Lakes Mall, if you noticed the words "J.C. Penney" over a store.

So today we rightfully celebrate the greatest gift a person could have, Jesus Christ. And we remember that God desires us to speak the good news to others, so that they might receive this gift also. Merry Christmas! Amen.

