

*John 1:1-14, 2016*

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

*John 1:1-14, 2016*

Let us pray. O God, your word is a light making bright our way to you. Open our ears to hear, our minds to understand, our hearts and souls to receive and our life to show forth your blessed word born to us this day through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Since the beginning of Advent we have anticipated, we have planned and we have prepared for this one day of the year

when we all take a little time to remember the birth of Jesus who came into the world as the Lord,

the Messiah, the savior,

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The day is here and you probably have given and received most of your gifts, you will eat with your families and friends later today,

and share your love and God's love in so many different ways.

Last night and for the last several weeks we heard the gospels tell us the story of Jesus birth, from the angels visiting Mary and Joseph,

to Mary's visit to Elizabeth,

the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem,

the appearance of the angels to the shepherds in the field,

and the shepherds telling their story and amazing everyone at the manger,

and the star that shined so brightly in the sky.

All these are stories that we remember so well.

But John begins his story of Jesus in quite a different way.

John begins by going back to a different new beginning, the first beginning when God created all things.

John begins his gospel saying, “In the beginning was the Word...”

It is a bold step for John to use words that begin the story of all creation,

the words he knows are the opening words of all of scripture.

It would be like beginning your novel with the opening words of Charles Dickens’ in *A Tale of Two Cities*,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

I don’t think you would be brave enough to do that.

But he talks about this Word that was in the beginning.

A word that was with God and that was God and all things were created through this one Word.

In the final verse of this passage this Word became flesh and lived among us, he said.

All of this points to at least one of the great mysteries of faith to which there seems to be no answer.

How can this Word, present at creation, in fact through which all things were created,

be a part of the Christmas story,

or have anything to do with the birth of Jesus.

Why is this passage the appointed Gospel reading for Christmas Day?

John wants us to grasp the deeper meaning of Jesus' birth,

To renew some of the connections we don't spend a lot of time thinking or talking about during Christmas.

We here in the Lutheran church often pray the Apostle's or Nicene Creed on Sunday morning, in which we say from the Nicene Creed,

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

This begetting of the Son is important. It refers not to the temporal event of some months prior to Jesus' birth,

but rather to the distinctive relation of Father and Son within the divine reality,

the divine existence,

the divine relationship they share.

When, then, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke speak of God's involvement in the conception and birth of Jesus,

they speak of God not as Father but as Spirit.

Matthew 1:18, [Mary] was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit,

And Joseph was told by the angel in a dream “the child conceived in [Mary] her is from the Holy Spirit.

As we continue the Nicene Creed we say,

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.”

This Spirit certainly gave life to Mary, and to Jesus, the Word made flesh.

To say that Mary’s child is from the Holy Spirit is to say that this is a radically new beginning

in which God has chosen to be with humanity in a new way,

decided to reveal himself and his nature in a new way, and chooses through taking on human flesh to restore all creation to himself,

and this is God’s doing not the work of humanity.

When we begin to think about the birth of Jesus as the celebration comes around each year,

our attention is easily diverted to the vision of this baby born to a young girl,

and all the joy that comes with the birth of any baby.

It begins to make perfect sense to have this passage from John as the Christmas Day Gospel reading to remind us that before becoming flesh and living among us,

Jesus existed, Jesus created, in fact created all things.

It is easy to forget that there is more to this birth,

this new beginning of God's interaction with humanity,  
than the birth of a baby, even if it is Jesus.

We can lose sight of the presence of Jesus from the beginning of  
all things,

with God, as God, long before becoming flesh and living  
among us.

But, as we begin to grasp the true nature of this baby who is  
born to Mary,

we receive the central and truly indispensable affirmation  
that in Jesus, it is God who has assumed our humanity,

continues to live among us even today,

and gives us the power to become the children of  
God.

I have seen that power as you have without realizing it.

It was the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of  
Siobhan Drury when she was preparing for baptism,

and on the day of her baptism just a week ago.

She then was joined to Christ in his death and resurrection, just  
as you have been,

and he will keep her and you forever.

This is not just a celebration of an event of 2,000 years ago.

This birth of Jesus has power and life today as Siobhan and  
you remember that you are reborn children of God simply

because God chose to take on human flesh in the body  
and blood of Jesus..

This is the gracious mystery conveyed in John's declaration  
from his gospel on this Christmas Day

that we may never fully understand until the day we are  
united with him forever.

Amen