Jesu Juva

**The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord – Christmas Day**

Text: St. John 1:1-14

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

All of us here this morning, I am sure, are familiar with the details and events leading up to our Lord’s birth; the miraculous pregnancy of St. Elizabeth, the cousin of St. Mary, and the birth of her son, whom we know as St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; John’s father, Zachariah the priest, and his song prophesying the call and mission of John to *“go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.”*

We all recall the visitation of the angel Gabriel to Jesus’ virgin mother, Mary, and his announcement to her that she would conceive and bring forth a Son who would be the child of the most High, and her humble assent to be the handmaiden of the Lord; of St. Mary’s visit with her cousin Elizabeth and St. John’s leaping for joy in her womb at the sound of Mary’s voice and the presence of the as yet, unborn Christ.

We remember the angels and their announcement to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night; the angel choirs and the glorias in excelsis Deo; the discovery by these same shepherds of Mary and the infant Jesus in an animal stall, a feeding trough the Newborn’s bed, because there had been no rooms available in all of Bethlehem; the visitation of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, and the slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem, two years and younger.

Our Lord’s early life is well documented by the evangelists, Sts. Matthew and Luke, who recorded these events in their Gospels, each from a different perspective, but both for the same purpose—to proclaim that this Babe is the only-begotten Son of God, *“born that man no more may die.”*

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. St. Mark seems a bit more hurried, and begins his account of Jesus’ life with St. John the Baptist preaching repentance and baptizing penitent sinners in the desert. When we read the Gospels of these three evangelists it is almost as though we are walking right beside our Lord and traveling with Him every step of the way.

However, St. John the Divine, the disciple whom Jesus loves, has a different perspective—he begins at the beginning, just not the beginning one might expect. While Matthew and Luke begin with the telling of Jesus’ birth, and Mark, with Jesus’ baptism, John begins his account in Heaven. Not that St. John does not relate events in Jesus’ life, he does, but his emphasis is not so much on what Jesus did. He skips over the events surrounding our Lord’s birth entirely. It is as though he has taken for granted that you are already familiar with the details of the nativity story and if not, you can read of them in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In John’s Gospel account, there is no direct reference to the Lord’s Supper, and he records no more than seven miracles.

Why? What is John trying to convey to his readers? He wants you to know that *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.”* Again, his emphasis is not so much on the events surrounding Jesus during His earthly life; on what He did or said. His interest is in telling you who Jesus is*—“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*”

So, while Matthew and Luke tell us a Baby has been born, St. John will tell us just exactly who that Baby is—He is the Word of God made flesh; He is God. While the others will tell us what Jesus said, John will tell us that whatever Jesus speaks is truth because Jesus is the very embodiment of truth. While the others capture your emotions, first with the story of Jesus’ birth and then with the horror surrounding His arrest and subsequent sacrificial death by crucifixion, St. John wants you to know that it is God who humbles Himself and comes to you as a helpless infant, and it is God whom they murdered upon that cruel instrument of death; he wants you to know that it was not simply a man but your God who bled for you, who suffered and died for you; that it is God who descended into hell and rose again on the third day. He wants you to know that it is God who has done these things for you, and to do so, he must start at the beginning of all things.

St. John’s Gospel transports us back to before time began and then interprets the Old Testament creation story in terms of Jesus. He tells us, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”* Those words, *“In the beginning”* are the same words that begin the account of creation in Genesis but *“the beginning”* is not to be understood as the first point in a time sequence as one might understand a timeline. Rather, it expresses that which exists outside of time before the concept of time was created by God. The *“Word”* of God was not created but existed before time began. *“He (the Word) was in the beginning with God.”*

It is this *“Word”* who created all things *“and without Him nothing was made that was made.”* John goes on to tell us, *“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.”*

St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, St. John the apostle, who leaned upon Jesus’ breast at the institution of the Lord’s Supper, who followed Jesus to Golgotha and did not flee, and to whom Jesus entrusted His blessed mother, wants you to know that this *“Word”* is the Immanuel, God in human flesh, *“God with us,”* who was there before time, who created all things, and now, has come as the Life and Light of creation, to redeem and restore all things through His innocent suffering and death upon a cross.

St. John wants to be sure that we know that all theology is Christology—that true religion has Christ at its center. Thus, all we know of God is centered in Jesus Christ. All who hear Him, hear the Father—all who see Him, see the Father, for He and the Father are One. He is *“God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.., being of one substance with the Father.”*

So we come back around to the beginning. This is the Baby whose birth we celebrate this day. This is the Baby who came to take your pain, your despair, your fear, and your sin into Himself. In return, He gives you His life, His righteousness, His innocence, His blessedness, His inheritance, and He fills you with His grace and truth. He gives you *“the right to become children of God.”*

The Eternal *Word* makes you children of God by mixing His Word with simple water and washing you clean in rebirth. He sustains and strengthens you with His Word that makes simple bread and wine, His Body and Blood; the same Body given for you, and the same Blood poured out for you for the remission of your sins. Your fears, your sins, your death were washed away for you, and you are clothed in the Life and Light of Christ Jesus.

This is the glory and miracle and the purpose of our Lord Jesus’ birth, of the Eternal *Word* of God taking on our flesh. His birth and life, His suffering and death, His burial and resurrection, His Body and Blood, they are God’s but He has made them yours and you are His. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”* And from the beginning, He has had one message for you, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

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

Soli Deo Gloria

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