

Christmas 2-January 2, 2022

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 1:1-18

“Jesus, More than Christmas”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from his Son, Jesus Christ who came from heaven to earth to save you. Amen

Creation, Anticipation, Incarnation, Revelation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Salvation and Ascension. These are all words that refer to ways that Jesus Christ comes down to you and does something for you. For many of you, Christmas is now over. Many people have taken down their trees and maybe with the exception of a few decorations of the season remaining around the house and some new gifts yet to be put away, another Christmas is now a part of history. The speed that the Christmas season arrives and just as quickly seems to disappear agrees with the length of time Christmas receives in our Church calendar. Christmas should get some attention 12 of the 365 days of the year, but quite honestly as soon as the candles are extinguished on Christmas Eve, we forget there are a few more days in this season. Since today is a new year, it makes it even easier to forget we are still in the season of Christmas that started last year. It is no wonder that we are exhausted after running from one concert, program, and party to the next during this short busy season of Christmas.

*This scripture from John is often given the title the **Incarnation** of Jesus. Incarnation means to become flesh, but these few verses in the gospel deliver to us the whole life of Jesus. John reminds us in his version of the Christmas story, there is so much more to the story of Jesus than a baby lying in a manger.*

*This reading today begins with another “tion” in the life of Jesus that is often overlooked as being a part of the Jesus story. John reminds us that Jesus was with God “in the beginning” before there was anything. Jesus was present in the **Creation** story. Jesus was with God and was the Word of God and became the light of the world when God interrupted the darkness with his speaking. Although Jesus arrived in the flesh on Christmas, John reminds us that Jesus was with God from the beginning of time.*

*John also includes the Advent season in these few verses for today. John the author talks about John the Baptist who was sent from God to prepare the way for Jesus so that everyone would believe in Jesus. John includes the **Anticipation** season that comes before the Incarnation story. John the Baptist speaks one more time after Jesus is born by pointing to him and saying, “This is he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’” John the Baptist even recognized that Jesus was present in the beginning of all things.*

*John briefly mentions the **Incarnation** of Jesus by saying Jesus is the Word made flesh. There is no mention of Joseph or Mary, angels, shepherds or wisemen. John’s short description of the Christmas story once again shows that Jesus does not stay in the manger long.*

John moves to the next season of the church year, Epiphany, where Jesus reveals himself to us. The first way that Jesus begins to reveal himself to you is through the sacrament of baptism. Next week, you will once again hear the story of when Jesus was claimed as God’s beloved child through the waters of baptism and how

you too are given the power to become children of God through this sacrament and bestowing of the Holy Spirit. The **Revelation** of Jesus to you begins with water and the Word.

John then tells us that the law was given through Moses. Moses reveals our problem by giving us the law, but Moses can't do anything to save us. The law reveals that we are sinners, but no matter how hard we try, we cannot ascend our way to heaven by striving to keep the commandments better. John reveals that your only remedy for the law is for Jesus to come down from heaven to earth for you. Jesus who was born to save, saves you by dying for you. It is during the season of Lent that we are reminded that because of sin, we are dust and to dust we will return.

The grace upon grace that we receive is fully given to us on Easter. Just like Christmas is more than a day, so also Easter is more than just a day to remember. Easter is more than an empty cross. Easter is an empty tomb. It is through the resurrection of Jesus that we have the confidence that our lives do not end when we take our last breath on earth. We have the promise of eternal life because since Jesus lives, so shall we. But the story of Jesus does not even end with the Easter story.

John ends this section of scripture by reminding us that no one has ever seen God. It is only through his son that we know God. Mary and Joseph saw Jesus. John the Baptist saw Jesus in the flesh. Jesus' disciples walked side by side with Jesus. You and I have not seen Jesus. We have not yet seen Jesus because of the final "tion" in the life of Jesus. His **Ascension**. But we know more about Jesus than these people who saw him in person. We know Jesus because Jesus is the Word. The Word of God that has been preached through the centuries and you have heard again today.

The story of Jesus wasn't so clearly revealed to everyone as it is now to you and me. When sin entered the world immediately after creation was complete, Adam didn't understand what it meant that his seed would one day crush the head of Satan. Adam didn't know the Lord was talking about Jesus. When Jacob was put to sleep by the Lord and he dreamed of a ladder that reached to the heavens on which there were angels going up and angels coming down, Jacob didn't know that Jesus was the ladder who was to come down from heaven in the flesh. David didn't understand the difference between his reign as king where people of the kingdom paid their dues to the king compared to the reign of Jesus who left his throne on high to pay the price for you so that through Christ you freely inherit the kingdom of heaven.

I use the following image to teach confirmation students about the church year. This image like John's beginning of his gospel reveals there is so much more to Jesus than the 12 days of Christmas. Jesus existed before he came down to us at Christmas. Jesus not only left heaven for you, but he also quickly left the manger to go to the cross to die for you and was secured in a grave. But in three days, Jesus left the tomb just as he said he would so that you would live forever with him. Next week, the Christmas season will be over once again. But the story of Jesus is not. The story of Jesus never ends, and he has promised to be with you today and throughout another year and into eternity. Amen