

## The Dawn of Grace

John 1:1-18 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Exordium:

Dear Christians,

Sing to the Lord a new song! Rejoice this jubilant day! For your light has dawned upon you; the sun of righteousness has arisen. The warmth of divine love and benevolence has shone upon the human race; the day of grace has dawned upon the whole earth. Through this little child, Christ our Lord, God's peace and good pleasure are on full display. Indeed, this child has come to break Satan's power. This child will bind the strong man and plunder his treasures. And this child is not distant; he does not greet you from afar. Jesus has come so that he may dwell within your heart, so that he may forever rest therein. Therefore, make haste to join the heavenly host in giving glory to our God and King! Lift up your voice in a glad song.

Let us pray,

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank You that of Your abundant mercy You sent Your only-begotten Son to be made man, thereby graciously causing us to be saved from sin and eternal death. And we pray that You would enlighten our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that we may give thanks to You for this Your grace and take comfort in it in every distress and tribulation, and so by Your Son, our Lord Christ, obtain eternal salvation. Amen.

We join in singing hymn 391, "Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn."

We who have traveled to the manger, who have adored the newborn King alongside the startled shepherds, who have beheld the majesty of Christmas midnight, have received a profound image. Not only do we behold this amazing sight but this morning we also travel back in time and space. St. John takes us from that manger scene to the eternal dwelling place of that little child. St. John displays how this small child gives us a special message. This message is more than a nice postcard of a precious newborn. This message is of who God is for us.

He who has been at the Father's side deigns to lift us there. He who from eternity sat within the majestic throne room opens the door for us to peer inside. This one, the Son, now for us won a view of who the true God is. "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" Before the void and the without form, before the "Let there be", we see into the before. Before the "before" of time, before a beginning, there stands one, but two. One: the Creator. Two: God and his

Word. So close it cannot be separated, so distant they cannot be brought together. They are one because only One made the heavens and the earth: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** Yet, there are two because St. John says there are two: God and the Word. Both were in the beginning. Both made the beginning. **“All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”** It was not like a master and an apprentice, a trainer and trainee, a pastor and a vicar; no they were equal. God created the heavens and the earth. The Word had all things made through him. Two, but one.

This Word is more than a word. This Word sustains all things. This Word is the Life. The heartbeat of a newborn child, the sprawling network of trees within a forest, the buzzes and chirps on a bright spring day, this Word sustains these. This Word is the Light of men. The dawning of the sun while a visible breath shakes you awake, the warmth of the fire cooking your dinner, the brightness of the rightly-ordered love, this Word sustains these. As we peer into the divine throne room, as we look at the “before” the “in the beginning,” we see two equal thrones. Both the Word and God sit on equally adorned seats. The six-winged seraphim fly around both thrones, they sing their praises to them both, they bow down in adoration equally to both. The Word is not any lesser. He is not any different. The Word does what God does. What God does, the Word does because the Word was God. Yet, there are two, not one. God created through the Word. The Word was with, was next to, God. So close it cannot be separated, so distant they cannot be brought together.

So distant that the Word can descend from the throne room and place his feet on the earth. So close that when the Word appears, he shows us the true God. While God dwells in an unapproachable light, while we cannot lay our eyes upon the Holy One, the Word has manifest God to us. St. John says, **“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”** The only way I can see God is to stare at that enfleshed Word of God, to behold that babe in a lowly manger, to look upon the dear Jesus. If anyone says, “Look, there is God!” or “No, there he is” and is not pointing to Jesus, then he points to a false God. The only God I know of is Jesus for the Word of God has made me known to God.

The light could not be contained. The brightness of God’s mercy burst forth triumphantly onto the world. The darkness faced its foe. The darkness had enveloped over every corner. Yet, as the sun of steadfast love dawned upon the earth, everyone met the light. St. John says, **“The true light, which gives light to 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.”** Some loved the darkness more than the light. Some could not stand to have their evil exposed by the light of righteousness. They missed the dawning of a new day. Others welcomed the light. They rejoiced at the warmth of the sun. They had awaited the eternal day of joy, the day without end. They could see the shining light in the sky and follow it to its end. They could be enveloped by the warmth and paradise of huddling around the shining light

coming from a wooden manger, piercing the gloom of the evening darkness. Some knew that the light, even if it seemed to be snuffed under the cover of the cross, under the cover of the tomb, would always be shining brightly, to cover the whole earth.

The very one who laid the stars of heaven sits, sheltered underneath them. The very one who gives food to the ravens when they call needs food from his mother. The potter who formed man from the dust of the earth becomes one with the clay. The Lord and Master over all things now the lowliest of servants. This is the mystery of mysteries; the profound gospel of the Lord. That which the angels of God earnestly desired to peer into and see. That which the saints of old desired of God, but was never accomplished in their time. That which Moses asked of on the mountain top, “O Lord let me see Thy face!” **“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.”** We have seen! We have beheld the glory of the only-begotten Son of God. You look at this man and what do you see? You look at this man and you see the Master and Lord, you see the potter who fashioned us all, you see the one who feeds and nourishes all, you see the creator of the stars of night. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that we get to marvel at something so profound and wonderful!

Hark! The little Christ child speaks from his humble throne, he brings us a message from his manger. What does he have to say? What is his word? Does he come bearing news of judgment? Of fire and brimstone on all sinners? Of sword and famine on all the rebellious? Of retribution and justice on the transgressors? No, his word is a simple one. Christ from his manger calls: “God loves you dearly. O, dear children, you are safe from danger. I bring good tidings of good cheer. From the sins that grieve you, you are freed; all you need I will surely give you.” Truly this child, this Son of the heavenly Father manifests the tender heart of the Father. For St. John says, **“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”** At that dear manger we learn of the greatest philanthropist, the greatest lover of man. What did this philanthropist give? He gave us his dear Son, he gave a child to be born. His dearest treasure, the Father did not keep to himself.

His treasure was more than sending the Son down to be born for us. The birth of this Son means you may be re-born. The Son of God, begotten from eternity was born in time that we born in time may be born for eternity, born sons of God. For St. John says, **“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.”** Thus the heart of the Father is not left to be seen from afar. It is not locked up in the throne room. No, this Christ-child lifts us there to see it for ourselves. The Father of Jesus is now our Father. The Father who loved him from eternity loves us for an eternity to come. The Father who gave him all honor, glory, and authority gives us honor, glory, and authority. All blessing, thanks,

and praise now be, to our Lord and King, for his great love for us shown, for lifting us to his glorious throne.

Though God spoke to his people of old by many prophets and seers, though he made known to all his words and promises, now in the last days he has spoken by the appearance of his Son. The eternal Word of God has manifested the love of God by his appearance in the flesh. He is able to make known to you who God is by the very fact that the Word of God is God. He is the one who was always with God, even before creation, when there was only God. And this Word came down in the flesh to dawn upon all a new day of grace, to shine his eternal light upon the darkness of death and sin. This eternal light has given you the power to be sons of light. All glory for this blessed morning which has dawned upon us, all glory to God the Father, and to God the Son, the virgin-born, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep you hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.