

The Nativity of Our Lord—December 25, 2025

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“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.”

“This [John 1:1] is the highest of all the Gospel readings.” Martin Luther makes that comment in a sermon on this text. He’s not wrong. Now, to be sure, all the Gospel readings are the highest in that they proclaim to you and give you Jesus. The point here though is relevant as you gather on this day in the Church Year, the Nativity of Our Lord.

The prologue of John’s Gospel beautifully proclaims the truth of the incarnation. It’s the highest of all Gospel readings as it starts from the infinite and vast and comes to a very point. A point in history, to be precise. It all comes to a head in verse 14 when St. John wrote, “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.” The Word of God is Jesus who came into this world and, as we heard the words from Isaiah in the Introit, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.” This coming into the world, this birth, his righteous life, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection are all, “for us.”

The Old Testament reading talked about the tabernacle as God promised to dwell with his people. That tent, though, was made with hands and was temporary. It and the subsequent Temples were preparing the people of God for what was to come, or rather who was to come, in the Gospel reading where Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. God becoming flesh, begotten of the Father, and born of the Virgin Mary, is earth shattering to be sure but what’s salvific in all of this is that it has been done for you to save you.

Seeing Jesus, you see God and his glory full of grace and truth. Let that sink in for a second. It’s all so very mind boggling when you look at this Gospel reading and hear things about the Word, creation, and concepts far beyond the reach of our frail understanding. What shines forth, literally, is this fact of God coming into the world to save his people, to save you. Celebrating Christmas is rejoicing in this birth of God in this world. The baby in the manger of Bethlehem is none other than the God who created all things, sustains all things, and is eternal. He is the one who so humbly lies there amid the filth of animals and is tended to by his mother, Mary. The fullness of God is here. The baby Jesus is none other than the eternal God. Mary, the mother of God, when she looks at her newborn Son sees God himself.

The Formula of Concord has a lengthy article, article VIII, on the person of Christ. Near the beginning of the article, though, it nicely confesses in summary what the reading today reveals to you about Jesus. “We believe, teach, and confess that God’s Son from eternity has been a particular, distinct, entire, divine person. Yet He is true, essential, perfect God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time He received also the human nature into the unity of His person. He did not do this in such a way that there are now two persons or two Christs. Christ Jesus is now in one person at the same time true, eternal God, born of the Father from eternity, and a true man, born of the most blessed Virgin Mary. This is written in Romans 9:5, “from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.”

Jesus as an infant is accomplishing his work. His righteous life is being lived fulfilling God’s law perfectly and all that was promised by the prophets is fulfilled in him. You sang about this truth in that beautiful and ancient processional hymn a few minutes ago, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten.” His ministry of preaching and teaching would come as he would grow, become strong, and filled with wisdom. His miracles confirmed who he is even as magi came from the East as we celebrate at Epiphany and bowed down in worship him as King. And yes, in the not-so-distant horizon loomed the suffering and agonizing death of the cross to pay what is owed by the very people who reject him. Being God in the flesh, though, he conquered death by his death and as he has laid down his life, he has the authority to raise it up again and did so on the third day. Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are all in view this day.

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And you see there is a great gift in all this as its all for you but even so, the Lord shows you abundant mercy and grace in calling you to be his own. As you celebrate the birth of your Lord Jesus points you to your new birth, he has given to you. John goes on further to write, “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.” This high and eternal language of John’s prologue which comes to a head in the Word becoming flesh also proclaims to you where you fit into this personally. The emphasis here is on the work of God. The main verb driving everything else in this verse is “he gave,” that is God gave. God gave this right to become children of God to you, and you received it not of your own will but as a gift freely.

The Holy Spirit has a purpose in your hearing of these words he inspired the Evangelist St. John to write with these profound words. Believing the incarnate Word, Jesus, you have life and you are sons of God born of God himself. That’s you and this is the eternal life you have.

Preaching on this text the famous 4th century into the early 5th century preacher John Chrysostom (Golden mouth) had this to say, “Therefore, he has reminded us of the manner of our birth, and by comparing it with human birth pangs has shown its superiority, saying: ‘Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ Moreover, he did this in order that, reflecting on the cheapness and frailty of the former birth, that ‘of blood and the will of the flesh,’ and realizing the value and nobility of the second, which is of grace, we should therefore conceive great esteem for it—an esteem befitting the gift that has been bestowed—and so henceforth show much earnestness.”

That birth you have been given is wonderful and miraculous. Chrysostom in that sermon connects this new birth rightly with, where the church has for centuries seen this takes place as most importantly as the Scriptures teach you in the Epistle reading. Listen again to it and the language of birth used by God through pen of St. Paul and how this comes about through a means. “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Your baptism is your new birth. It’s your washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. All things were created by the Word and through the Word and your new creation, your new life, is no different. You are saved by the working of God as he has accomplished it in the Word made flesh and delivered it to you and worked this salvation for you in the baptismal waters.

The world was created by the Word, the world rejected the Word, but dear people of God, “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.” Behold Christ, born for you. He was born into this world to redeem you, and he has given you a new birth as he has washed away your sins, rescued you from death and the devil and given you eternal salvation. Rejoice with the angels at his birth and go running with the shepherds to where Jesus is found. Here you are and he is here as he still dwells among you richly to forgive you, strengthen you, guard you, and keep you in his care through his word and sacraments. Rejoice that your Lord was born, and you have been born from above, born into his Kingdom which knows no end. This is your gift and it’s a gift that lasts for all eternity.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. “Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!”

Dear people of God, the goodness and loving kindness of God your Savior has appeared, and he has saved you. Thanks be to God for such mercy and grace shown to you. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his

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glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This is your Lord who did this all for you and promises you have a place with him, reborn into his Kingdom, now and forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.