



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.mzluth.org

December 25, 2008

The Festival of Nativity of Our Lord

Hebrews 1:1-9

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98

Second Lesson: Hebrews 1:1-9

Gospel: John 1:1-14

Jesus is the Father's Christmas Letter

He tells us who Jesus is

He wants us to focus on what Jesus has done

This time of the year, I think a lot of us get those Christmas letters from relatives, friends and things like that, right? You get the letter that talks about everything that's happening in their family. Mind you, I enjoy them, especially the ones from people that I went to school with that I haven't seen in 10 years. It's about the only time of the year when I get to hear what's going on in their life. Then I feel guilty for a little bit, not very long, that I don't take the time to write one to send to them.

But some people, I think, have a problem with some of these letters. Sometimes they sound just like "brag letters," right? You know, "Frank, our second son, just unraveled the mystery of the human gene. But we're not sure where he is going to go to high school next year." Sometimes they just seem a little over the top when you read them.

If you consider the words that I just read to you and you think of them as God's Christmas letter to us, there were some things in there that were really over the top, isn't there? Everything was made through him. He sustains all things by his powerful Word. But isn't it amazing, as we come together this morning, we know this to be absolutely true. He isn't stretching anything here. This is the One who left heaven and became true God and true man. This is who he is.

So as God writes his Christmas letter to us, he tells us all about who Jesus is, but then he also wants us to focus on the truth. Not only is he superior to the angels, but look at what he has done for you. That's what leads us to rejoice. That's what leads us to sing with joy and to find a peace, like we always say, that passes all understanding because we see what Jesus has done for us in God's Christmas letter in Hebrews 1 here this morning.

You can kind of hear one of the themes that the writer to the Hebrews is going to be developing just in these first nine verses. One of the themes that he lays out is that Jesus is superior to all the angels. Jesus is superior to Moses. Jesus is superior to all these other things. You can see that already in these first nine verses. There were those that were trying to elevate worship of the angels, elevate the importance of the Law beyond Jesus. So the writer to the Hebrews has to write to set them straight and

he starts out, as he shares God's Christmas letter with us, by telling us just how superior Jesus is.

He says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." He tells us that the angels are something, they are special, they are God's messengers, they are God's servants who serve us, but did God ever say any of these things about them? And the answer, of course, is "no," because the angels serve God and it's God who became flesh. It's God who became one of us. It's God who has done all of these things.

Some of the same things were repeated in our Gospel, weren't they? He made the world and even though he made the world, the world didn't recognize him. He came into the darkness, but the darkness could not understand him. That's why you and I can rejoice today that God's Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to see the light, to see that this Christ-child isn't just something that's on a stamp at this time of the year to stick in the corner of your Christmas cards or your Christmas letters you send out. Jesus isn't just a slogan as "the reason for the season." He is true God who existed before time. If he were to remove his presence from the universe, the universe would cease to exist immediately. That's who this Christ-child is that we stare at and wonder and we sing about.

He is a being beyond our understanding. So we simply have to humble ourselves and say, "God became flesh. God became one of us. I don't know how that could be, but I believe it because that's what God has said." Then we rejoice because God reveals to us why he did this. He doesn't just tell us, "My Son is great and he is better than your Son." He says, "Here's what he has done. After he provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven."

He provided purification for sins. Purification—it burns away all impurities. It burns away the things that spot us and stain us and make us impossible to stand before our God. God demands absolute holiness, not try your best, not do your best, not be better than some other schmo that you run into that's a real loser and a jerk, but be perfect as God is perfect. Be holy as God is holy. That's what he says to us. That's what he demands of us.

Because you and I can't do that, here's what God has done. He sent Jesus to provide purification, to live perfectly in our place, to love righteousness and hate wickedness in all those times where you and I have failed to and all the times where we did the opposite; hated righteousness and loved wickedness. We've done it, each and every one of us, in our thoughts, in our words, in our actions, in the way we react to the gifts we exchanged today or last night or whatever. You and I at times can use any opportunity to sin against our God.

But our God provided purification. Every last instance where he had the opportunity to love righteousness, he did it, because you and I can't. Every last opportunity where he had the chance to hate wickedness and turn away from it and not embrace it, he did it

so that his perfection could be our perfection. God now credits it to us as righteousness and when God looks at us, he no longer sees our sins. They have been purified. They have been washed away. They have been burned away by the purifying fire of God's Gospel message that tells us that Jesus has removed our sins.

As we come to the Lord's altar today, we receive his very body and blood that was given and shed for our sins for the forgiveness of our sins. God works in the Word. God works in the Sacrament. He longs to come to us in all these different ways because he wants us to know just how desperately he loves us. He wants us to focus on what Jesus has done, not look at what we do, but look at what he has done, and then find in it the absolute joy that passes all understanding.

That's what our Father's Christmas letter talks to us about. Rejoice in it today. Live in it today, tomorrow and forever.