



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 25, 2010

The Festival of the Nativity of our Lord

Sermon Text: [John 1:1-14](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 52:7-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 98](#)

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 1:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 1:1-14](#)

The Word Became Flesh

Did you unwrap your presents already? Did you get all that done, pick up all the paper, get it in the right bin? Did any of you have to go through what I've had to go through a number of times way back in the past and again this year? Some gifts are not exactly what they appear to be when you pick up the box and you're all excited. I remember as a kid, my Uncle Al, my Mom's brother, brought my Christmas gift over. It was the biggest box that I had ever seen as a kid. I was as fired up as anyone could be thinking it had to be something great. I had never seen a box that big. I thought it looked like you could put a fridge in it. It looked huge to this little kid's eyes. And yes, I was little once.

So I start tearing into it. There's newspaper crumpled up inside. Okay, I start throwing out the newspaper, and I'm not finding anything solid in there yet. I'm tearing into it and find inside the cramped up newspaper there are little matchbox cars. There were a lot of them. And it was a pretty cool gift, but I had my heart set on something huge, not 20-30 matchboxes. You know that sparkle in a kid's eyes? It went out real quick. It turned out to be a pretty cool gift, but it took me awhile to figure that out though. It just wasn't what it seemed.

If you want to hear what happened to me last night when we opened our gifts to find out how things aren't always what they seem, ask Paula after church. She can tell you, because I'm not telling you from here.

Things aren't always what they seem, right? As we talk about Christmas, it just doesn't seem to be what God says it is, right? It's a baby. It's not a baby where you would expect it. Even those guys that we call "wise," when they came from the East, they went looking for him in the capital city, not in podunk Bethlehem. And the shepherds, well they found him in the manger. If they knew the Old Testament at all...think of what we just read today from Isaiah. "God will lay bear his holy arm," talks about his strength. And "all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God." If you're reading that as an Old Testament believer, you're expecting something grand and glorious, right? Instead, it's a baby wrapped up in some clothes and there is cow saliva there some place. It just doesn't seem to be all that impressive at first.

I suppose that's why the good Lord had four different men write Gospels for us. That's why the Holy Spirit inspired them so that we would get the point that it's more than what

it seems. It's something incredible. The Word, the eternal Word of God becomes flesh and makes his dwelling among us.

In John's Gospel, this is how he starts his Gospel. The other Gospel writers, when you read them...Matthew shows how it fulfills prophecy. Luke shows how he came for the lost, the needy, the disenfranchised so to speak. But John opens his Gospel with a message that says, "Don't let this picture fool you. The person, the power and the purpose of the one who was born in Bethlehem is what our whole existence is all about." It's the most important thing for us to know. John drives our attention to Jesus as the life of the world, Jesus as the Word made flesh. He uses these images and these pictures and he says "all the rest of my Book, this is what I want you to focus on...I want you to focus on Jesus and who he is and what he did for you." It's the only answer for our lives in this world.

So look at how he does this. He starts out by talking about the person of our Savior. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was with God in the beginning. He starts out by telling us that the one he wants us to focus on, the Word made flesh, Jesus, is true God. Before there was a beginning, there was Jesus. He's always been there. This isn't just a human baby. This is the God-man Jesus, whose birth we celebrate. Don't be deceived by the wrapping paper. He looks like any other person. But this is true God from all eternity. Don't rely on just what your eyes can see.

Then he tells us about his power. Because of who he is, the power that he has. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." It talks about his power. He made everything. He said, "Let there be," and there was. The one who has this kind of power sets it aside and becomes a baby? We adore babies, right? If anyone picks up a newborn or holds their own newborn or someone else's, we start oohing and aahing, don't we? But there comes a time when that "ooh" sounds a little different, right? You make a different sound of "ooh" because now there's a problem that you have to take care with that little baby. Think about it...Jesus, who made everything, becomes that little infant that is so dependant on his mother and father, physically speaking, to care for his needs; to change him, to feed him, to do all these things. Things aren't what they appear, right?

Here's the one who made everything, and he's an infant. We know how dependant infants are. That's what Jesus did for you because in him is life. In him is light. In him is holiness and perfection. In him are all the things that are not in us. That's why it's not that unusual, not that unexpected that he came into the world, yet the world did not understand it, the darkness, because that's you and me by nature. By nature you and I are darkness. We think we're pretty bright. We think we're the sharpest knife in the drawer, the brightest bulb on the tree, but when it comes down to it, we are pitch darkness. There's nothing in us that's good or holy that can understand a Holy God.

You want proof of it? Think of how many times in your life or in my life we thought we knew better than God. Thinking “God, why did you do it this way? Why did you do it that way? You screwed up. You don’t know what you’re doing.” The darkness can’t understand the light. We as sinners cannot understand a Holy God. For all those times that we doubt God, we need to just simply take a step back and say “Lord, once again, I have sinned against your holiness. Forgive me. Once again I’m reminded of what a sinful wretch I am. Lord, have mercy on my soul.”

Even when John fleshes out the picture of the Word becoming flesh, he does it only in a way that brings us back to the light. He talks about John who came to the world because they all knew about John. John was a pretty interesting character. He dressed kind of funny. He did a lot of amazing things and he irritated some pretty powerful people. So this is a guy that people would know about and talk about. Yet, John reminds us that John the Baptist was not the light. He came into the world so that people might be focused on the true light. Because of our darkness, we wouldn’t understand who he is. We needed someone to say, “Hey you bunch of dummies! This is him. Pay attention to him. Not me...him. He’s the one that lives perfectly in your place. He is the one that is going to die to take away your sins. He’s the one that is greater than me because he was before me.” Jesus came into the world for that purpose...to give light to every man. It didn’t matter that people wouldn’t recognize him. It didn’t matter that his own would not receive him. His love for the entire world, for every person that ever will live or ever has lived, was so great that he came and endured rejection, endured heartache, endured all of these things because he wanted to bring life to you and to me and to every other person in the world. That’s our God.

Even though many rejected him, God, by his work, not our work, gave to his people, his elect, the faith that Jesus is the light of the world, that Jesus is the Word made flesh, that the message of Scripture is centered in that Word, that message that is Jesus. His life and his death paid for our sins and takes away our sins. His life and his death gives meaning to the gifts that we exchange. His life and his death assures us that when we die, we too will rise again. You and I believe that and you and I rejoice in that, but it’s nothing we can pat ourselves on the back for. There are a lot of people who reject him. If faith lives in your heart, rejoice that it does. Don’t give yourself the credit. Give God the credit. Because it’s God who led us to believe these truths. These truths seem so contradictory to our human eyes. The baby is true God. He doesn’t come in his power and force people to believe. He comes in his grace and says, “Here is who I am and here is how much I love you and here is how I will do things for you. I’ll live for you and I’ll die for you.” That grace, that mercy, that in itself is the power that leads us to believe.

God doesn’t work the way you and I would expect him to, but when we finally get past our own sinful disappointment that God doesn’t do things the way we would want him to, then we get to see what a wonderful gift he has given us. He has given us eternal life. He has given us his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, because he knows how weak we are and how much we need to be strengthened in this trust. The Word became flesh and pitched his tent, lived among us, made his dwelling among

us for a time. We've seen his glory and we live in the light of his glory and we are reminded that we too are only making our temporary dwelling in this world. Heaven is coming. Then we will see his glory. We will see his light face to face. What an incredible blessing our God gives us.