

JOHN'S SONG OF LIGHT AND LIFE
CHRISTMAS DAY

JOHN 1:1-14
DEC 25, 2014

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ 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.

Christmas is a time for music and singing
but even at Christmas there are some songs
about which some might say, "You call that music?"
In this year's Advent and Christmas services,
we have been looking at songs of the Savior,
the Benedictus of Zechariah, father of John,
the Magnificat of Mary,
the Gloria in Excelsis of the angels.
Today, as we look at John 1, you might say,
"You call that a song?" We don't usually think of it that way
But, as mentioned last night, the Bible doesn't say
that the words of Zechariah, Mary or the angels were sung.
Still they are words in poetic form that move us to sing.
And so, these words of John also are quite poetic
and also have inspired much of our Christmas singing.
Singing is when words and music join together
in a way that causes the words to stick in our heads
and even make a difference in how we think and feel.
This is something like what happens when
Jesus, the eternal word, is joined to human flesh
so that God sticks with us and gets into our heads
and makes a difference in how we think and feel.

We see this as John tells us about...

HIGHEST, MOST HOLY, LIGHT OF LIGHT ETERNAL
LIGHT AND LIFE TO ALL HE BRINGS
WORD OF THE FATHER, NOW IN FLESH APPEARING

HIGHEST, MOST HOLY, LIGHT OF LIGHT ETERNAL

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

God tells Job that at creation, the morning stars sang for joy.

Maybe, like us, they sang about how...

All out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night.

or Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending He.

John 1:1 makes a clear connection with Genesis 1:1

where, when there is nothing else but silence & emptiness,
there is God

and God who said, "Let US make man in OUR image."

is one God in three persons, including Jesus.

Jesus is first born as a human at Christmas,
but he has no beginning. He is eternal God.

When God breaks the silence and fills the fast emptiness
and creates all things by simply speaking his word,

John says Jesus is that word by which all things are made.

Without him was not anything made that has been made.

And the first thing he made was light,

which we all depend on for energy to sustain life.

and then he creates life in the forms of all that has flesh.

including mankind. And it was very good.

But quickly as beautiful Christmas songs disappear from radio

and beautiful wrapping becomes a pile of trash

and exciting gifts are missing parts and batteries

and happy children are tired and in tears

and their parents are exhausted and exasperated,

sin, like an overloaded fuse that blows out,

plunges the world again into darkness and death.

But the Word does not stop singing. There is a second verse.

LIGHT AND LIFE TO ALL HE BRINGS

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. .. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

Where meek souls will receive Him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

It used to be that even if you had words,
you needed light to be able to read them.

Now, with our electronics, the words themselves give light.

Long before any of this, God's word gave light.

We need this kind of word in this world's darkness.

Once again there is the word, then light, then life.

and our creator needs to work again a new creation.

because although God has given us life
and eyes and ears and all our members.

his children all too quickly focus on the gift
and ignore the giver.

We plug up our ears to his word or drown it out
with everything that pops into our head.

We clench our eyes shut to his light
or drown it out with every bright idea we think we have.

And so we hold our noses to the life he breathes into us
or hurry ourselves to death trying to live it up.

Does that cause God to give us the silent treatment
and turn out the lights on us? No, it does not.

His word still speaks in a calm steady voice.

His light still shines in darkness that doesn't understand it
but still cannot overcome it.

The word which calls into being things that are not,
and miraculously creates light in the darkness
also has power to create faith in the faithless
and so to give life to the dead, giving us spiritual life now
and calling us from our grave to eternal life.

John compares this to our physical birth
which comes not by anything we do or decide
but by what is done for us by God the giver of life.
This new birth of ours is dependent on the birth
of the word itself which not only gives life
but takes on life in the flesh.

WORD OF THE FATHER, NOW IN FLESH APPEARING

¹⁴ 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.

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light
The Word becomes incarnate, and yet remains on high,
as cherubim sing anthems of glory in the sky.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity.
Here again the eternal word that gives light
ends up with physical life
It is said that if you want to get someone's attention, whisper.
The eternal word of God that gives life to all
speaks to us most powerfully by becoming a tiny child.
Here we see the gentleness of his love for us.
Here we see glimpse the depth he will go to for our sake.
But what we see here shows us there is more.
He started as a baby so that he could do all we must do
and suffer all we suffer as he grew up.
He was born in the flesh so he could die for our sake.
This is the glory of God,
not the glory that makes us hide our faces in fear,
but the glory that makes our eyes open wide in amazement
at the fullness of his grace and his truth.
It was a great revelation to find God in the flesh.
It was a great revelation to find the baby in a manger.
It was a great revelation to find Jesus on the cross.
It was a great revelation to find him alive again in the flesh.
It is a great revelation to find his flesh and blood again
here in the Lord's Supper.
And in each of these manifestations is revealed his grace.
He continues to be flesh and to be among us today
and so he continues to speak to us his love and forgiveness
and continues to give us life and strengthen faith.

This is why we are here again today,
to sing again the songs that stick with us.
as we hear again this eternal word,
who became flesh to stay with us always.

HIGHEST, MOST HOLY, LIGHT OF LIGHT ETERNAL
is the eternal word that created light and life.
LIGHT AND LIFE TO ALL HE BRINGS
by speaking to us the word that lights up our darkness
and brings us to life as God's children
WORD OF THE FATHER, NOW IN FLESH APPEARING
takes on a body to communicate and cause God's grace
by living and dying for our salvation
so that we can see his truth
and sing his praises now and forever.