

Sermon December 25, 2022 ... Christmas Day

Gracious and holy God, today we give thanks that the Word has become flesh, that through your Son Jesus you became human like us. We thank you as we recognize you in the incarnation. May you speak words of truth for this day and every day. I speak in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Of eternal love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see, evermore and evermore.**

Have come ... to truly appreciate that beautiful hymn for this Christmas season ... that may not be as well known ... and that we don't sing very often

Find myself ... drawn into truest spirituality of Incarnation ... the mystery of the Word becoming flesh ... becoming every bit a human being ... as he was divine ... equally like you and me ... and God ... at same time ... in same person

Those words ... originally written in fourth century ... were a representation through poetry and song ... of what John was saying ... in words of the prologue to his gospel

What Clemens penned ... exactly what John was expressing ... in those poetic ... eloquent words ... first chapter of his gospel ... that theologians have debated ... and individual people like you and me ... have tried to understand ... especially with our finite human minds

Truth ... may sound complex ... but John's incarnation narrative ... is mystical ... and not all that difficult to comprehend ... because it's not meant to be understood ... it's meant to be experienced

John ... poignantly expressing the eternity of the Son of God ... and truth of his Divinity ... that the Word was right there at side of God ... active and engaged in work of creation ... that the Word has been part of the divine since before the beginning of time

Yes ... that may befuddle the human mind ... in a way that straightforward Luke doesn't

Luke ... as a straight up accounting of all that happened ... Mary ... Joseph ... the journey to Bethlehem ... the stable ... the manger ... the angels ... the shepherds ... reads as a kind of history text

Not ... that there's anything wrong or inaccurate about it ... it's just from a different perspective

John ... is much more ethereal ... drawing us into the mysticism of what this day is about ... without having to be able to explain it ... but to receive it as a gift ... and experience the light in the midst of the darkness ... that can and will never be extinguished

And ... there it is ... the nub of why we're here ... we want an experience of the divine ... we want to encounter the Word that became flesh ... we need to know that the Word still dwells among us today

However ... not always easy ... to see through the mire of this world ... and to look above the chaos ... to find ourselves experiencing first hand ... the Word that becomes flesh ... right here in our midst

Inspirational Christmas Story ... mimics what John was describing ... The Gold Wrapping Paper

Once upon a time ... man who worked very hard just to keep food on the table for his family ... few days before Christmas ... was upset with his little five-year-old daughter ... after learning that she had used up the family's only roll of expensive gold wrapping paper.

Money was tight ... became even more upset when on Christmas Eve ... saw that she had used all expensive gold paper ... decorate one shoe box she had put under Christmas tree ... also concerned about where she had gotten money to buy what was in the shoe box.

Nevertheless ... next morning the little girl ... filled with excitement ... brought the gift box to her father and said ... "This is for you, Daddy!"

As he opened the box ... he was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction ... now regretting how he had got upset with her.

But ... when he opened shoe box ... found it was empty ... said to her ... "Don't you know, young lady, when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

Little girl ... looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes ... whispered "Daddy, it's not empty ... I blew kisses into it until it was all full."

Father was crushed ... fell on his knees ... put his arms around his precious little girl ... begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

In very real sense ... today in our journey to stable in Bethlehem ... each of us is being given a golden box ... filled with unconditional love from our God ... in the form of Baby Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Truly ... there is no more precious gift ... than the love of God ... which is yours and mine ... through the gift of the Incarnation ... the baby in the manger ... Word made flesh ... Emmanuel ... God here with us ... in this very moment ... right here ... right now

What a gift ... that we don't need to be able to understand ... or explain ... in order to receive ... and that is a good thing ... for which I truly give thanks ... because I know for myself ... I will never understand the Incarnation ... and I won't ever be able to explain it ... but I can always receive that gift ... the love of God in His Son Jesus Christ

And ... our response to the amazing ... awesome ... gift of this incarnation moment of grace ... is to praise God who has invited us into this experience ... that has the potential to transform us ... and our lives ... and renew again in us the mystery of our faith

Another reflection ...

Praise God for Christmas; Praise Him for the Incarnation; for the word made flesh.

I will not sing of shepherds watching flocks on frosty nights, Or angel choristers.

I will not sing of a stable bare in Bethlehem, or lowing oxen,

Wise men trailing star with gold, Frankincense, and myrrh.

Tonight I will sing praise to the Father who stood on heaven's threshold

**And said farewell to His Son as he stepped across the stars to Bethlehem and Jerusalem.
And I will sing praise to the infinite, eternal Son, who became most finite, a baby
Who would one day be executed for my unfaithfulness.
Praise Him in the heavens; Praise Him in the stable; Praise Him in my heart.**

On this most holy day ... with our sacred and holy pilgrimage and journey finished ... having arrived to witness for ourselves ... this wonderous event ... when heaven and earth are united ... and God is born ... when God becomes Incarnate ... and himself starts a journey ... that will lead to our redemption ... our salvation ... the forgiveness of our sins

Luke ... tells us that Mary treasured all these things in her heart

May ... we also treasure these things in our hearts ... and in the depths of our souls ... where God touches us with all the grace ... all the love ... all the mercy ... we need to live our lives each day ... with faith ... with hope ... with trust ... in who God is ... and all God has done for us already ... and all God promises He still plans for us ... and all of his creation too

And remember ... at its core ... the story of the Incarnation ... Word becoming flesh ... it is a mystery ... so we don't need to get it ... or understand it ... or be able to explain it

We ... can though always believe in it ... because it is the truth ... the holy and sacred truth of God coming among us ... to be one of us ... in His Son Jesus ... equally human and divine

What a gift ... not wrapped in expensive gold paper ... but in a child ... lying in a bed of straw

**Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving, and unwearied praises be,
honour, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore.**

Thanks be to God ... Amen!!!