

25 December 2006
Christmas Day

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Our Brother”

Text: John 1:1-14; Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6

Tell us, Mary, who is the Baby you gave birth to during the night? *His name is Jesus.*

Yes, but tell us more, Mary! For we want to know who He is. *He is my Son.*

He is your son who bears the name Jesus, yes . . . but speak still more, fill our ears, and make known to us the child’s father. *His Father is God.*

But Mary, how could that be? How . . . ? *Shhh.* Mary touches her finger gently to your lips. That we may marvel at this wonder, at this child, at this mystery.

For what has happened today? God’s Son is born *again*. First He was eternally born of His Father. Today He is born again of His mother on earth. In Heaven He has no birthday because He is *eternally* born – without beginning and without ending. As long as there has been God the Father there has been God the Son. But *today*, God’s Son is born on earth. Born today with hair for Mary to run her fingers through, born with toes to wiggle, born with a stomach that needs to be filled, *and born with blood to bleed.*

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . .

O Word of God, child of Mary, what did you do this for? Why did you condescend to come to us and dwell among us sinners?

Was it to give us an example of how we ought to live? *Yes, but there’s more.*

Was it to die on the cross to atone for our sins? *Yes, but there’s still more.*

Was it to rise from the grave? *Yes, but there’s even still more to it than that.*

Yes, more. So tell us, John, beloved apostle, this mystery of the Word made flesh. Write, and tell us the story.

In the beginning was the Word . . .

And what happened in the beginning? ***In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*** (Gen 1:1) And everything was perfect. Including and *especially* the crowns of the Word's creation, His man and woman. Adam and Eve. They were like Him. Made in His image. Reflecting His holiness and righteousness. And how precious we were to God! How perfect and good! . . . Until the darkness came.

What darkness, John?

When we decided God wasn't good enough. And yes, I said we there. For we all were in Adam and Adam is in us. And we turned creation upside-down. Choosing against God's ***grace and truth*** and turning instead to Satan's lies and death; sin, blindness, and pain. The choices we still often make today, are they not?

And so you can understand, can't you, the pain and sorrow in God's voice, when the Son, the Word, called out in the Garden, "*Adam, where are you? What have you done?*" And when instead of blessing, is spoken those horrible words, "*Now cursed are you . . . guilty.*"

And what then? What *then*, was God to do with us? Simply wash His hands of us and let us go "to hell in a handbasket?" No, He couldn't do that. *God is love*, you told us, John. He is slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

So what, then, was God to do with us? Would He then simply speak His almighty Word and eliminate evil, and open up Eden's doors again, just as if nothing had ever happened? No, He couldn't do that either. *God is just*. The wages of sin is death. The sentence of "guilty" must be followed by its execution.

So what then, John? ***The Word became flesh.***
Isaiah, speak! What does this mean?

***Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations . . .***

. . . and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Yes, it is the glory of God lying in the manger. Yes, it is the strength of God lying in the manger. It is the Son of God, **come to take our place**, in both justice and love. Leaving His throne in Heaven to do battle here on earth. To become what He created. To be born again.

Some people say that it is below God to do such a thing. That for God to come to earth, and be born as a man, He lost His dignity. The powerful do not become powerless!

But if *beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news*, then even *more* beautiful are He whose feet *accomplished* this good news; the nail-pierced feet of the one who did not raise His voice, and reigns from a cross.

Oh, how backwards our thinking is! For when God became a man it was not *He* who was lowered, but *you* who were lifted up. Jesus did not give up any dignity by coming to us, but rather gave us back our dignity! The dignity and honor we gave up to Satan. Jesus has come to give it back to us. The Son of God became a man in order to make you all into sons of God.

John, can I have a witness? ***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

Yes, the Light of the world never shone so brightly as from the cross. When those same words spoken to us in the Garden: "*Cursed . . . guilty*" were now spoken upon Him as He hung in our place. And the One born this day with blood to bleed *did* bleed. The One born with human flesh was whipped and pierced and nailed and buried. *Cursed and guilty*, not because of Himself, but because of us. God's justice upon Him. God's love given to us.

And ***after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*** *Cursed and guilty* would not be God's final word! No, not death, but life. Right John?

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Yes! The Son, the Word, who created life has come to give us our life back again. He came for the life of the world, and so rose to life again after His death. For ***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.

Oh Christian, don't you see? We have now received more in Christ than we lost in Adam!

In Adam we lost the Garden of Eden but in Christ we gained access to Heaven!

In Adam we lost the fruit of the tree of life, but in Christ we are given the flesh and blood from the new Tree of Life!

In Adam, we became less of a man and less of a woman than God intended us to be, but in Christ we become more than men and women – we become sons of God!

Talk about Christmas gifts!

And that is what we are celebrating this day! Not only that God's Son is born today – born again! – but that so are we! Born again by water and the Word. Born again of Him who came to be born as one of us.

And it is not only we who celebrate, but as we heard last night, the angels too are singing with joy! The angels who worship this One. For Jesus, the Light of the world has come. Just as ***in the beginning***: the light has scattered the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it! And as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Tell us, Mary, who is the Baby you gave birth to during the night? *His name is Jesus.*

Yes, but tell us more, Mary! For we want to know who He is.

Who He is? He is your brother!

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.