

The Miracles of our Christmas Celebration

On this 2nd Sunday after Christmas, I want to tell you about the miracles of Christmas. That's right, "miracles," plural. There are two great Christmas miracles proclaimed in our text today from John chapter 1. One is that the Son of God became man, and the other is that, because he did, we become the children of God. These are "The Miracles of Christmas" I want to talk to you about today. Just a note.

First, the Son of God became man. What a profound mystery this is for us to ponder! There is nothing more marvelous or wonderful than this! The eternal Son of God took on human flesh and was born and became man, became our brother. Absolutely awesome!

John introduces this miracle with words that call us back to the beginning. He writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

"In the beginning." This recalls the first verse of Genesis, the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." What John is saying is, is that the one he calls "the Word" existed even before the world began. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Here is the mystery of the inner relationship of the Holy Trinity. The Word—and we know in retrospect this is referring to Christ, the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity—the Word was with God, in what we might call a face-to-face relationship with God the Father. And yet at the same time this one called the Word was God, that is, he is divine, true God, in his very nature.

John goes on to say: “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Think back to the creation account in Genesis 1. “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

Now looking back, we can see that this was the Holy Trinity in action, all three persons. The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, is hovering over the waters. God the Father speaks, and there is light. And so, the Word, is active in the work of creation.

This is the one John refers to as the Word, namely, the eternal Son of God, when he says: “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

The divinity of Christ here is being emphasized. Christ has always been true God. From eternity he is the one and only Son of the Father. You know, in the third century of the church, this teaching of Scripture about the divinity of Christ was being threatened by a heresy called Arianism, which wrongly taught that “there was a time when he was not.” In other words, the Arians said that Christ was merely a created being—oh, to be sure, a most excellent created being, almost godlike in some respects, but not true God. But if the Arian heresy had won the day, all the Christian faith—and with it, our salvation—would be lost. For only God could rescue us from our plight. Only one who is true God could accomplish our salvation.

So, the Council of Nicaea, led by a great theologian by the name of Athanasius, put together a way to combat the deadly heresy of Arianism with a beautiful confession of the person of Christ, his divine nature. They said that we believe “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

And note that the “by whom all things were made” here is talking about Christ, that by him all things were made. Which is exactly what our text is saying, when John writes: “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

And then what does the Nicene Creed go on to say? “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man.” Here is the miracle of Christmas! As John puts it: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”! Think of that! Try to wrap you mind around it! The eternal Son of God, by whom all things were made—he became incarnate, that is, he came in the flesh as that little babe of Bethlehem.

Presbyterians are much more familiar with and recite the Apostles’ Creed, but include many of the same things.

Why did God’s own Son come in our flesh? Because this was the will of his Father, namely, to win our salvation. We needed to be saved from our sins. God’s just judgment against sin is death. And that would have been us, every one of us, cast off into outer darkness, damned and doomed for eternity.

But God in his great love for us had a plan, an eternal plan, to save us. He would send his own Son into our flesh to fulfill the Law we had broken. Christ would keep the commandments of God perfectly in our place. And then, although sinless himself, he would shoulder the burden of our sin and take it to the cross as our substitute. And because he is the very Son of God, his innocent shed blood is mighty enough to cover the sins of the whole world, including ours. We are forgiven now, for Christ’s sake.

This is the only way we can be free from our guilt and overcome the grave, and that is, by what the incarnate Son of God has done for all of us. In him is life, and his life—new life, resurrection life, eternal life—is the light that is shining for you today.

Which leads us to the second miracle of Christmas. The first being the Son of God became man. The second Christmas miracle is that we become the children of God. John tells us about that, too: “But to all who did receive him”—that is, to those who receive Christ by faith—to all who received 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.”

Christmas is not only about the Son of God being born as a man, but also about the sons of men being born as the children of God! Two great miracles for the price of one, and the price to us is absolutely free! It is all by God’s grace, his free gift in Christ.

Not only was Christ born and lived and died and rose again as our Savior, now the second miracle is that God gives us the faith to believe in him, to trust in him for our salvation. Through faith in Christ, you and I become God’s children. We have been born again, born from above, born of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism.

There in those blessed waters God made us his children and joined us to Jesus. Now we are the children of God. Now we get to call on God in prayer, knowing that our heavenly Father cares for us in every need. Now we are part of God’s family, the church. And what is to come for us, as the children of God, is the great inheritance we will receive when Christ our Savior comes again.

That inheritance is everlasting life in a resurrected and glorious body, in a renewed and restored creation, alive to God—no more sin, no more sorrow—in fellowship with all the saints of all times and places, united in praise and worship around the throne of God and of the Lamb. What a Christmas present that will be!

Dear friends, on this 2nd Sunday after Christmas Day, we rejoice in two great Christmas miracles, intimately related and connected. One is that the eternal Son of God took on human flesh and became man, precisely to be our Savior. And the second miracle is that, because of him, and through faith in him, now we become the children of God, forever. The Son of God became man, that we might become the children of God. Praise God for these miracles of Christmas! Amen