

In the Flesh

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for this evening comes from our Gospel Reading of John chapter 1. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... 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.”** Thus far the text.

The glory of God is in the flesh of Christ; that is the only glory that we ever need to know. In Him there is nothing too indescribable, too incomprehensible, too outside of us. In Christ Jesus alone do we see God and the fullness of His glory.

This evening we hear nothing about stables or shepherds, angels or mangers. Today we hear only about God in the flesh, for that is the only thing that really matters: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** There is nothing else that we need to hear; for in that fleshliness of the Word, that humanness of Jesus, we have the fullness of God’s glory. Mary is not just the mother of our Lord, but she is the Mother of God. Lying in a manger we do not just have a baby but we have God. Pondered in a Virgin’s heart is not just a remembrance of a birthing, but the ponderings of God growing inside of her, God being birthed through pain and anguish from her, God nursing at her breast. ... If you want to know God you must know Him in the flesh; not your flesh, but His.

Everything that has ever been made has been made through the Word. From the very beginning He was there creating; from an eternity before the beginning He was there with God, He was God, He is God. In the beginning God spoke and the world was created. The Word spoke breathy words and breathed the breath of life into our flesh. ... This is the same Word that became flesh, took on our flesh, bore our flesh. If you want a picture of the beginning, if you want an image of the God who created all things, if you want to see the glory of God look no further than the flesh of Jesus; as a baby, as a child, as a man, as a dead man on the cross.

But the created turned on the Creator and upon creation. Satan slithered, whispered, and spoke lies into fleshly ears. Eve listened, desired, and took fruit with fleshly hands. Adam watched, abandoned his duties, and willingly ate with a fleshly mouth. ... And in the blink of an eye the whole world changed: from perfect to fallen, from bearing God’s image in the flesh to bearing Satan’s, from being in communion with their Creator to being divorced from Him. That which the Word spoke into being, spoke into creation, spoke into life, was dead and dying and diseased and despairing. ... And so the Word took on flesh...

The Word took on the flesh of His creation. He stepped from His pure and kingly hall to be born of a woman He created. He was placed among animals that He had made, sung of by angels that He had produced, worshipped by shepherds that He had knit together in the wombs of their mothers. He was treasured in a heart that He started beating, held in arms that He had molded, soothed with a voice that He had placed into its mouth. God was man. The Creator was part of His creation. The Word was flesh.

And flesh He must be for flesh we are; and in our flesh we were fallen so in our flesh He must raise us up again. The Incarnation is the greatest gift in the history of mankind; even greater than creation itself. For in the Incarnation is new-creation. In the Incarnation is life; not just created out of nothing but newly-created out of that which was dead. Speaking into existence is one thing; bringing life back from death is a completely different and far superior thing. ... If you want to see the glory of God don’t look upon creation; look upon the new-creation.

God as a man, the Word made flesh: Jesus the Christ, the babe of Bethlehem; Jesus the Christ, the Good Shepherd of Israel; Jesus the Christ, the Suffering Servant; Jesus the Christ, the dead man on the cross. The fallen creation must be newly-created and that new creation could only come by the death of its Creator. On the cross God died in the flesh. He had to die so that He might give us a new-birth in waters that flowed out of His very own fleshly side. God had to die so that He could grant to us the new-creation that comes from eating His crucified body and drinking the blood that soaked the earth of this fallen world. ... God in the flesh; born to live, born to die, born to create once again. ... If you want to know God and gaze upon His glory, look no further than that dead man on the tree.

Risen from the grave, in the flesh is our Lord: sins forgiven and buried deep; fallen creation forever in the ground, your life forever united with His death and His resurrection. Risen from the dead, the Word made flesh crushed the head of Satan. He and all His fallen angels in hell heard the damning sermon of new-creation for a fallen world, a sermon of reconciliation for a creation gone astray, a sermon of forgiveness for a humanity in sin, a sermon of life for dead men. ... If you want to see God and know of His ultimate glory, look no further than the resurrected Jesus in the flesh.

Ascended into heaven, body and all, in perfect human flesh, sits God, sits Jesus; that baby in the manger, that miracle worker of Judea, that dead King of the Jews, that resurrected from the grave Christ the Lord. And this He had to do in the flesh as well, for the new-creation of our fallen flesh does not end with sins forgiven or our souls in heaven, but must include our human flesh risen from the dead and seated upon the throne. In sinking to the lowest depths, God in the flesh raises our humanity above and beyond all things: above all creatures and powers and dominions; above all angels triumphant and angels fallen; above the slithering serpent and the deadly fruit, above the entire world and all the powers therein. God in the flesh exalts our flesh to the right hand of the Father. There He sits enthroned in glory. There He sits with human hands still showing the nail marks, there He sits with holey feet set upon His footstool, there He sits with the flesh of His side still gaping, there He sits with scars upon His brow making for the perfect crown. ... If you want to see the glory of God, look no further than Him in the flesh ascended and exalted above all things.

Advent and Christmas are about more than just a manger and shepherds, singing angels and lullabying Virgins, smelly stables and soiled swaddling cloths. It is about God in the flesh; born in the flesh. It is about God in the flesh; crucified in the flesh. It is about God in the flesh; risen in the flesh. It is about God in the flesh; ascended and exalted in the flesh. ... If you want to know God, if you want to see His glory, look no further than the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Look no further than Jesus. ... In the name of Jesus. Amen.