

St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)
Christmas Day – December 25, 2023
John 1:1-18 – Measure the Love of God
Rev Peter Wagner

Grace, mercy, and peace on earth to you, with whom God is pleased to dwell! Amen.

Today the light of heaven has come into the world. The Word is made flesh. Our God, Immanuel, dwells with us. No one has ever seen God; but today, you see God in a baby. God shares our humanity, to reveal himself to us. The only-begotten God, the Word who is at the Father's side, he has made God known.

Today we celebrate the most joyous day in the history of creation. Greater than the beginning. Greater than creation, when the morning stars sang together. Now God has come to restore and redeem it all. So the morning stars and angels sing together again, more joyously than ever before. Heaven is open, God's dwelling place is here. Eden is restored, God walks with us again.

Once we were cast out of Eden for our sins, condemned to futility in a dying world. Cherubim and a flaming sword barred the way to the tree of life. But now our God has come out from paradise, into our wasteland, to seek us out. He's come to make the instrument of death, the cross, into a new tree of life. He's come to join us in our suffering, to share our sorrow, and die for us, to lead us home. God is here on earth, to raise up the lowly from the ash heap, to bring mankind to heaven.

“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.”

Today, heaven has arrived in Bethlehem. Heaven is lying in the manger. The angels and archangels who always bow before the throne of God, ceaselessly praising him day and night, today they are here in Bethlehem, worshipping at the throne of a manger. The cherubim are here to see God, robed in swaddling cloths. The seraphim are here to see the creator of heaven and earth, lying among the animals he made. The Sun of Righteousness who fills heaven with light has become the light of the world.

And so they sing. Listen to the mighty hymn of heaven. Join their chorus. The angels sing, the archangels blend their voice. The cherubim bring joyful praise. The seraphim exalt his glory. Let heaven and nature sing. Let all creation praise our God for his glorious incarnation.

This day he who was, and is, and is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, is born. He was with God in the beginning, and he was God. But now God the Word does something new, something better than the day of creation. He who is, becomes what He was not. He is God, but now he is also man. From this moment to eternity, God is one with us, Immanuel.

“Of the Father's love begotten, E'er the worlds began to be, he is Alpha and Omega, he the source the ending he.” You have heard of the immense love of God, love that cannot be measured, love beyond comprehension. But today, the immeasurable love of God is measured. Measure the immeasurable love of God in this: by how far he humbled himself for us. Measure the immeasurable love of God in this, that God took on our human nature. Measure the immeasurable love of God in this, that he entered creation as a baby, to walk with sinners, and make our world his home.

Measure the love of God in this: that the immortal one who made the heavens and earth, who formed us out dust, puts on our mortal body. Our flesh is the cloak of the creator. Measure the love of God in this, that he who cannot be touched, the only-begotten God, has put on my body, my corrupted nature, to touch me. Measure the love of God in this, that God hung dying on the cross. Measure the love of God in this: that he lays down his life so I might live. And measure the love of God in this: since we refuse to believe unless we see God with our own eyes, God has deigned to show himself in a body, to remove our doubt forever.

How can we ever comprehend it? How could God love us so much? And how is God conceived in Mary? How was heaven enclosed in her womb? How can this be, for she is a virgin? How can this be, for he is eternal, and we are mortal? Nothing is impossible with God.

So let heaven and nature sing! But then, be silent. Marvel now, O heaven and earth. Reverently bow and worship this child. Rest your faith in the power of the Incarnate Son, the light of the world. Be silent, while God works wonders. God wills, nature yields. For God has the power. He descended; he redeemed, in him alone is salvation.

Even when God created Adam, even when he formed him from the dust, the first man could not come alive until God touched him and formed him. Adam was dead until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. As it was in creation, so it is again. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. But now God has come to touch and form our humanity again with his hands, to breathe into us the breath of life. But now it is even better. Not only does he touch us, he takes on hands like ours. Not only does he breathe life into us, he breathes through nostrils of his own. God takes his first breath as a baby, he walks among men to touch and heal. And then he breathes his last on the cross, exhaling the breath of life, that we might breathe it in.

So cover your mouth in wonder. Be still and know that this child in the manger is your God. The Ancient of Days has become an infant, for you. He who sits on the heavenly throne lies before you. He who cannot be touched, the immortal, invisible, the only-begotten God, is lying in the arms of Mary. He is bound with infant bands, to break your bonds of sin. In him, humility becomes honor, humanity is clothed in glory. The immeasurable love of God is measured.

He gives, and I receive. He takes my body, to fill me with his Word. He takes my flesh, to give me his spirit. He takes my death, to give me life.

O come, let us adore him. Today the ancient curse is ended, the devil is confounded, the demons take to flight. The power of death is broken, the slaves of sin are free. Truth is restored; paradise unlocked. Heaven is in Bethlehem, and from Bethlehem, heaven spreads to all the world. Sing ye heavens, and earth reply. For he who was God, whom heaven could not contain, today he is born to us. He by whom all things were made nurses at his mother's breast. The King of creation nestles in her gentle arms. No greater love could God show you, than to come to you like this. Amen.

Now to him who has shown us the way to the Father, to the only-begotten God who is at the Father's side, to him be all praise and glory forever. Glory to God in the highest! Amen.