

GRACE AND TRUTH ARE YOURS
FROM JESUS CHRIST

John 1:1-18

Rev. Edward Bryant
Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches (ELS)
Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2018 | CHRISTMAS
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD -
CHRISTMAS DAY
YEAR C

<i>Old Testament</i>	Isaiah 52:7–10
<i>Psalms</i>	Psalms 98
<i>New Testament</i>	Hebrews 1:1–9
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1:1–14

Hymns (ELH)

302 The Tree of Life
110 vv. 1, 7 O Come, O Come Emmanuel
137 O Little Town of Bethlehem
138 Joy to the World
181 vv. 1-4, 7 Of the Father's Love Begotten
116 Angels We Have Heard on High
133 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Dear fellow redeemed: Take up your bulletins or your Bibles and follow through this text with me. Luther, whose sermon on this text for Christmas Day ran over 50 printed pages called it “the most important of all the Gospels of the church year.” (Lenker, Baker, 1:171) For everything is bound together here from the creation and the Trinity through the atonement, the resurrection, and our life now in the church militant. I promise I won't be so exhaustive as Luther (even if

I were capable of it). But as a text it is like a diamond mine of which I have before held up one or two gems, and now I hope we can look at the riches all together.

John 1:1–2 (CSB) **1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.** If these words are reminiscent of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” then you are tuned into God’s word through John. For the same God speaks today through His prophet Moses and through His apostle John.

We are talking of the Word here, the LOGOS, the full and complete revelation of God.

He was in the beginning. Already at the beginning of the universe, he was there and therefore without beginning or end.

And the Word was with God. He is everlastingly together with God – as one person of the trinity.

And the Word was God. He is no less divine than the other persons of the Holy Trinity.

He was in the beginning with God. There has been no change in Him or the fact that He is God the Son

Now come with me to the last verse of the text. There mustn’t be any misunderstanding about whom we are talking. John 1:16–18 (CSB) **¹⁶Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, ¹⁷for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.**

Moses and all the law with its sacrifices and ceremonies was a faithful picture and shadow of Christ. But Jesus Christ is the One who has brought grace and truth. The baby in Mary’s tummy was God. The baby who lay in the manger and was cared for by a young mommy was God. The man who hung naked on the shameful cross was God. The body in the grave was God’s body – in the grave until with all

the power of God He struck death the death-blow and rose from the tomb. It is a man who is God who ascended to the throne of David and enlightens us with grace and truth – unmerited atoning love, and the truth to which our faith clings.

The body and blood of this man Christ that is present, distributed, and received by us in His holy supper is the body and blood of God.

It just takes John a little while to get there, so let's go back, take his hand, and let him lead us.

John 1:3–5 (CSB) **³All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.**

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. There is nothing in the universe that came into being without Him. There is One God, and only through this second person of the Trinity did God create the world. There is no other creator.

And life came through Him. Physical life surely, and also eternal life, but the life that is crucial for us is the life that gives light. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. This is the life that eliminates spiritual darkness. It is the life of faith so that with it the littlest child sings “Jesus Loves Me,” and “Away in a Manger” and knows truth about divinity, theology, and salvation – knows Christ, in fact. All this goes on while the most brilliant minds are in the dark. ONLY Jesus gives light to men. There is no other source. This is why the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it. Without faith there is no light.

John 1:6–8 (CSB) **⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.**

To emphasize that Jesus is the only light of man, John (the apostle) tells us about John (the baptizer). Now John the

Baptizer was a preacher. John preached down mountains, preached valleys full and made roads out of them, so to speak. He and every faithful prophet, apostle, evangelist, minister, teacher, and every mom and dad teaching their children could point at Jesus so that Jesus shines in our hearts. But it's like pointing at the sun: It is the sun that gives light not us.

John repeats for emphasis, John 1:9 (CSB) **⁹The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.**

There are all kinds of light in the world, like the light of reason, the light of conscience, the light of learning, the light of history, but none of them can enlighten the heart of man and show us God, none except the Word, Jesus Christ.

John 1:10–11 (CSB) **¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.**

While Christ is the only one who can give light to this dark world, not everyone saw the light. Taking a blind man out into the sunshine doesn't help him see.

We live in a world, sadly, where the blind tell us that they see. We live in a world that is saturated with unbelief. The atheists and secularists know nothing of God, but act like they have been to the ends of the universe and in all dimensions spiritual and physical and have searched all time and space and can say for sure that there is no God, because they haven't seen Him. The problem isn't with the light, but with their blindness.

People right and left reject Christ and the Word whenever the Word is not what they want to hear. People think that the light is in their thoughts and feelings and inclinations and moods. But they are blind.

But this is a light that also opens blind eyes, so John goes on: John 1:12–13 (CSB) **¹²But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³who were born, not of natural**

descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

The Life that is the Light of the World gives Light and LIFE. My parents gave me life, so I am their child. The Word gives life and He is God, so we are children of God, believing in Him.

Our faith was not our work, or the work of any man, but God's work. People don't believe because they were born to believers, or related to believers, or because we give super-good explanations or sermons or are extra-good at converting people. People come to faith because of the word of God, coming from the Word of God, Who IS God. And who is this? Christ incarnate, Christ in the flesh. John 1:14 (CSB)
¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word who created the universe, the One who is God and the perfect expression and revelation of God was born on a day and at a place imperfectly known (I can't say it was Dec. 25th) but nevertheless a place on earth and at a moment in the history of the world. And His glory, his giving off of light, was seen by John and others. It was glory of the only One who could really bring life and light into the world. And it came in the form of grace and of truth.

In Christ we see the undeserved, unmerited, but perfect love of God. We see it in His state of humiliation, as Paul says, Philippians 2:6–8 (HCSB)

⁶who, [Jesus] existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.

⁷Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men.

And when He had come as a man in His external form,

⁸He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—

even to death on a cross.

In Christ we have the truth about ourselves and our need for righteousness. In Christ we have the truth about the true and living God: Eternally Three persons and one divine essence.

What fools people are to turn to idols, to counterfeits. Every age has them. Baal or Ashtoreth, Zeus or Apollo, Science, Reason, the Enlightenment, Licentiousness, Government, Great Men, and Mankind itself have all taken the place of light and have brought darkness and blindness. Even John underscored that there is no other who is the source of life, hope, and salvation.

John 1:15 (CSB) ¹⁵ **(John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ”)**

He is the everlasting light.

John 1:16–18 (CSB) ¹⁶ **Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness,** ¹⁷ **for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.** ¹⁸ **No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.**

The law of Moses, like John, was good, but good because it pointed alone to the One who is the everlasting light.

Dear ones, we are gathered together today and hope and joy because there on that first Christmas Day a Savior was born to you, Christ, the anointed man, the Lord, the Word, and the infinite God. No less than God the creator chose graciously to become also a creature so that He could redeem His creatures.

He is the everlasting light who has brought light to you in the form of faith and forgiveness. May you ever live in the light!

AMEN.

