

“Twice the Word and New You” John 1:1-14

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But 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.

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.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Blessed Christmas, dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

What a lovely time of year it is! I guess it is probably made even more lovely because of what we receive during this season. And what do we usually receive? Gifts, yes, gifts!

Gifts from our families, gifts from our loved ones, gifts from ... yes, don't forget the gifts from the Triune God. Let's today briefly reflect on three amazing, incredible gifts that we have received from our Father in heaven.

The Word from the beginning, the Word today and a new you, your new status, your new identity. These are the gifts which our gracious Father has given to us and keeps giving to us, but because there is not much splendor in them, because they appear to be too ordinary, we often fail to appreciate them.

Let's try it now. **First, the Word** from the beginning. **“In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh.”** We won't comprehend the extraordinary greatness of this gift. Not on this side of eternity.

How do we say it in our Creeds, who is our Lord? **“I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord.”** Yes, Jesus from Nazareth. The baby Jesus. True man. Just like us. As historical, as earthly, as human as any of us.

Born weak and fragile, breastfed by His Mom Mary, taught by His parents, teased by His older siblings, He hungered, He feasted, He wept, He rejoiced and laughed, He was sad, tired, angry, passionate... just like us. And this very humanness of Jesus often obscures His divine nature.

We misuse His graciousness and His closeness to us. Yes, even we Christians. Too often there is no respect, no awe, no wonder, no reverence, no obedience, no fearing, loving and trusting Him above all things. We are all guilty of this.

Too often ever we call Him our Lord in the name only, as we want to remain in the driver's seat of our lives ourselves. But... He was in the beginning, through Him was created everything that there is, in Him everything holds together, this Jesus is the Creator God, the holy One, the Almighty One, the eternal One.

He became flesh, not for us to despise Him, but so that you can know Him, know our God personally, know His affectionate heart towards you, so that you could know Him as your God, as God who is with you and has come to serve you.

This is the first and the greatest gift, when the Word from the beginning, who became flesh, gifts Himself to you: "I will be your God and Father and you will be my sons and my daughters." Just receive this gift!

And how do we know Jesus today? That's right, through the Word. Through the written and spoken Word. **This is another gift that our God gives us – the Word today, the Bible.** But how do we see the Bible?

It's just a book. When you look at it, it is no different than other books. When you open it, it still looks like every other book. Maybe the difference is that this book contains information about God? Also, pastors tend to encourage us to read the Bible as much as we can, as if it was something special. But why?

Because it is. The Word. Because this is how the Word who was in the beginning, through whom everything was made and is still held together, this is how He speaks to us. Today. This is how He comes and speaks to you. Today.

Get this! We don't read the Bible to learn something about God. When you read or listen to the Word of God, the Triune God Himself speaks to you. The Bible is His way of communicating with us, the way He speaks to you, His voice...

Have you been to the Whispering Wall in Williamstown? It is a dam built in the turn of 20th century. It is more than 100 meters wide. It has this incredible feature, the one that gave it its name. You can stand on the one side of the dam, and someone can stand on the other side, separated by more than 100m, and you can hear their voices as clearly as if you stood next to one another. It is quite amazing.

Now, when you open your Scripture, when you read and listen to the Word, it is quite similar to our experiences at the Whispering Wall. The person at the other end may be far away from you, you may not be even able to see them, and in the case with our God, those words were spoken not just from far away, but also a long, long time ago, but still – they arrive in your ears loudly and clearly.

That is His gift to you. You can hear His voice, speaking to you, here and now, even if we are seemingly separated by millennia and oceans and continents. Still, He desires to speak to you, to converse with you. And why is that?

Because God's words are not like our words. **And here we come to the third gift – a new you, your new status, your new identity.** Our words usually describe what is, and even in that task we exceedingly fail.

God's words, on the other hand, do create a new reality.

Remember, our God is God who speaks. He does everything by speaking. By speaking He brought everything into existence. His speaking keeps the world going, and His speaking has done something incredible to you as well.

Take a moment, look at the people around you! What do you see? Anything unusual? Anything special? Anything that causes amazement and awe? No? But what if you looked in a mirror? What would you see then? Just our old selves... with all our imperfections and failings? But that is not how God sees you!

When you see any of your brothers and sisters in Christ, or when you think about who you are, we should exclaim in excitement and awe. Yes, we should! For we are surrounded by the most incredible beings. By glorious eternal beings.

What do I mean? Just this: **“But to all who did receive Him [the Word in flesh], who believed in His name [that Jesus is the Lord], He gave the right to become children of God.”** This is who you are! You are surrounded by beings who are God's own children, and you are one of them.

Imagine that you walked into a building and suddenly, wow! You see someone from the royal family. What would your reaction be? Just picture it... imagine, feel it! “Look, look! Heirs to the throne!” Wow!

But here, look! the heirs of God the Father and co-heirs with Jesus His Son! Look, these are the people who were chosen before the foundation of the world to be brought into God's family, so that you can reign with Him forever.

Look, look! See these people! They have the Spirit of the Holy God dwelling in them. They are the visible manifestations of the presence of the Triune God Creator and Redeemer with us. This is you! How glorious and how majestic!

And all of these are your Father's gifts to you...

Today we remember the humble birth of Jesus, how the Word who was in the beginning became flesh – for you. And also, His greatest gifts to us may appear similarly humble and ordinary to our senses. But they are anything but that!

I pray that the Holy Spirit helps us to appreciate all these amazing gifts for what they truly are! The Eternal Word, the Triune God here for you. Speaking His new life-giving Word into your heart. Having adopted you as His child, and now guiding and accompanying you as we travel to our ultimate destination, our eternal home, New Heavens and New Earth.

Marvelous gifts, divine gifts, the greatest that there are!

Blessed Christmas, dear brothers and sisters, and may the Spirit of God help you to rejoice in these gifts! Amen.