

**Christmas Day**  
**December 25, 2020**

**The Lessons:** Isaiah 52:7-10  
 Psalm 2  
 Hebrews 1:1-12  
 John 1:1-14

**The Hymns:** # 387 (1-3) *Joy to the World*  
 # 480 (1-3) *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*  
 # 384 (1-3) *Of the Father's Love Begotten*

**The Collect:** Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reign with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**The Sermon:**  
 "The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day"  
 Hebrews 1:1-6

The Word of the Lord from Hebrews 1: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son." This is the Word of the Lord.

Dear Friends in Christ:

Christ is the final Word. At many times and in many ways through the Old Testament, God spoke to His people of old. Law here, Gospel there, a message condemning wickedness and then a sudden prophecy that the Savior was coming. As people waited for the Savior, it was sort of a bunch of puzzle pieces to put together, but everything that people needed to know about the Messiah was there. It all pointed to the anointed One who was coming: but once He came, He would no longer be a puzzle. He would be the FINAL Word. If you want to know salvation, listen to Him. Listen to the only-begotten Son of God.

He is the heir of all things. The Father declared in Psalm 2, today's appointed Psalm: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession." If you're interested in authority, there's some authority for you. God the Father declares that all things are the Son's inheritance. I don't know what sort of inheritance you anticipate from family, but it hardly compares to being the heir of all things.

He is the One through whom all things were created. Genesis 1 declares that God created all things by speaking. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. So He spoke throughout the six days of creation, and everything that He spoke to make was good. But you heard more today in the Gospel of John: "All things were made through him (through the Son of God!), and without him was not any thing made that was made." If you're interested in power, there's some power for you: when Jesus

speaks, He does. He accomplishes. He spoke to create the heavens and the earth. He spoke to the blind and they could see—He spoke to the deaf and they could hear.

Now, in Hebrews 1, we hear that God speaks to you through His Son in these last days. God, who spoke through His Son to create all things, now speaks through His Son to you.

He is the radiance of the glory of God. Remember your Old Testament accounts: where God, there radiance and glory. When the Lord descended on Mt. Sinai to give the Ten Commandments, there was glory to be seen—the pillar of cloud and fire, the light and the lightning. When He filled the tabernacle and the temple, there was that radiant glory again. It was scary stuff: the people saw it, cried in fear and kept their distance. But they could point to the glory and say, “There is our God.”

Likewise, they could point to His Son and say, “There is our God.” If you’re interested in the glory of God, there’s some glory for you. The Son is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the exact imprint of God’s nature. If you’re interested in majesty, here’s some majesty for you. He is not just another prophet, telling you what God-up-in-heaven says. He is not half-God and half-man, possessing some of God’s attributes but missing others: He’s not the love-half of God while the wrath-half is lurking somewhere else. He’s the exact imprint of God’s nature. The Son of God is fully God Himself, nothing less.

He upholds the universe by the word of His power. There’s that “word” word again. It is not just that He created all things in the past, set the world in motion like a spinning top and stepped back to see what would happen. If you want a hands-on God, then here’s some hands on for you. The Son of God still speaks His powerful Word to uphold the universe. He is both Creator and Preserver of all things. There will be a tomorrow not because the earth completes another rotation and the sun comes up again, but because the Son tells the earth and sun to keep going. Without Him, nothing. With Him, all things are preserved.

He is the final Word. He is the Heir of all things. He is the Creator. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the exact imprint of God’s nature. He upholds the universe by the Word of His power. That’s completion, authority, power, glory, majesty, ongoing supremacy. That’s six things about the Son of God.

Here’s a seventh: He’s in a manger. That’s the miracle. That’s the point. That’s Christmas. The Son of God is born of Mary. She’s given birth to her Creator. To keep Him alive, she’s nursing the One who provides daily bread to the world and keeping warm the One who commands the sun to rise each day. Mary has immobilized the all-powerful Son of God in swaddling clothes so that He can’t really move a muscle. The Radiance of the glory of God is lying in a food trough for animals. The One who upholds the universe by His Word has got to learn His abc’s.

The Word has become flesh to dwell among us. God has become man. He hasn’t given up His divinity: He’s still fully God. He’s all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present and eternal. But He has also become man: fully man. Fully able to be tiny, vulnerable, hungry, tired...even able to be hurt and to die. He’s become flesh...and He hasn’t even got a decent bed.

Why? Why is Jesus born of Mary? Why has he come to this earth? Our epistle announces another amazing truth: He has come to make purification for sins. He has come to make purification for sins. Pay attention to that. He hasn't come to see what it's like to have flesh and bone. He hasn't come to see who's been naughty or nice. He hasn't come to tell you to knock off the sinning and slap you around until you do. (It's not that He's okay with sin, but that you're dead in it and can't save yourself.) He hasn't come as "Moses Part Two" to give you more rules to live by. He hasn't come to give you a happier, more prosperous life before you die eternally.

He has come to make purification for sins. In other words, He has come to give you what you most need by doing what you cannot do.

How does He make this purification? You know how it goes consistently in the Scriptures: sins are removed and purification is accomplished by one means—sacrifice. The sacrificial preparation has begun, and it continues as Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, begotten of the Father and born of the Virgin Mary. He's the perfect Child—literally. Unlike every other baby born in this world, He is without sin; and He is without sin because a sacrifice for sin must be pure and without blemish.

He doesn't stay in the manger. He grows up—and He grows up perfect and holy, without sin: not just because He can, but because He's doing it for you. He lives to be the pure and perfect Sacrifice, yes; and He also lives to give you the credit for His pure and perfect life. When He takes away your sin, He also gives: He gives you His purity before God.

The time of the Sacrifice comes. As strange and miraculous as it was that the Creator/Preserver/all-powerful/radiance of the glory of God spent His first day on earth in a manger, try this one on for size: He spends the Last Day of His humiliation on a cross. It's not astounding that sinners have rejected Him and want Him dead. It's truly amazing, though, that He permits them to crucify Him. It is not that He is overpowered, but that He submits to be the Sacrifice. It's by His death on the cross that He accomplishes the purification of sins. The Father's joyous declaration, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You" is replaced by the Son's cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

This is the Sacrifice: the Father judges the Son for the sins of the world. He condemns the Son for your sin. For mine. That is how this purification of sins is accomplished: the One who was born for you and lived for you also dies for you.

And He rises again! Death and grave are no match for the One who keeps the world turning. Why does He rise again? For you—so that He might raise YOU from the dead. And what does He do now, in the meantime? He has "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Why? For you: to joyfully declare to His Father, "I have died for them. I have purified them by My death, and they are now yours, forgiven for My sake." And the Father who declared, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You" to Jesus, now declares to you, "You are My beloved child, for the sake of My only begotten Son."

That is why Christ the Savior is born—to make purification for your sin so that you might be born again. So you are born again in the waters of Holy Baptism, joined to His death and resurrection there so that you might be a child of God. And the One born of Mary isn't done with you yet: He who upholds the universe with His powerful Word speaks His Word of grace and forgiveness to you, so that you might remain purified before God. The Radiance of the Glory of God, become flesh and once

wrapped in swaddling clothes, now gives you His very body and blood, swaddled in bread and wine for the forgiveness of your sins. For your ongoing purification. For life and salvation.

That is why you rejoice in Christ at Christmas, and that is why you repent when you're distracted by those messages that would rob you of true joy and life. It's why you don't follow the world's gambit: the world only finds Jesus acceptable when He's a baby in the manger, because then He looks like any other helpless baby and Christmas is all about us doing stuff for Him! It's why you don't see this holy day as a mere commemoration of something that happened long ago, but a milestone in the Lord's ongoing plan for your salvation. It's why you don't turn Christmas gifts into idols, the be-all and end-all of Christmas: for as nice as all sorts of gadgets and toys and clothes can be, they're all going to wear out.

No, you don't turn these gifts into false gods; when you do, you repent, and you see these gifts as little reminders of the gift Christ gives to you—His Incarnation, His person and work to make purification of sins for you. It's why you don't idolize family this holiday season—for as much of a great gift is love among family and friends, far greater is the love of Christ for your family and friends that He has been born to lay down His life for them. It's why you join the joy of the shepherds in the fields, keeping their flocks by night.

When the Father brought His Firstborn into the world, He commanded, "Let all God's angels worship Him." They did. They sang to the shepherds, and remember what the angel said: "Unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Note it, and note it well. The angel didn't just say, "A Savior is born." The angel said, "A Savior is born for you."

Dear friends in Christ, that is the miracle we celebrate today: Christ is born for you. And He who was born for you also lived for you. And He who lived for you also died for you. And He who died for you also rose for you, and sits at the right hand of God for you. Why? So that He who made purification for sins might continue to purify you from all of yours.

A blessed Christmas, then, to you all: because you are forgiven for all of your sins. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.