

The Word: Coming into the World
John 1:6-13
Advent Midweek II
December 12, 2018

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week, near the end of our meditation, you heard these words:

"...if only," the eager one pleads, "if only, that light, that life, that Logos would make himself known to the world... if only that One would invade the world... if only that one would descend into the world specifically to battle the darkness of the world... then there would be hope."

And, that meditation closed with these words, "how eager [we are] for next Wednesday, to hear that this 'true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.'"

This evening's continuation of John's first chapter is all about that, isn't it? Certainly, there's the anticipated declaration, as we heard in verse 9, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." What reason for anticipation-turned-to-joy! What reason for excitement that we, those who had been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, have the life, the light, the Logos coming to us!

And, if we are going to hear that – indeed – the Logos is on the move and descending into the world, then, it makes perfect sense that – in the very midst of an image of divine undertaking – in the very midst of this otherworldly description about the Word becoming flesh – in the midst of all of that, we hear about *John*.

Has that ever struck you before? That right on the heels of those opening five verses that seem to stretch out to the far ends of the cosmos, suddenly, the text turns ‘on a dime’ and drills down to the narrow pencil-point of one preacher: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” What in the world? That seems so trivial! Why does *that* matter when we’re pondering things like the Logos and creation and the face-to-face oneness with the Father?

It matters because this is what it looks like that the Logos was coming into the world. If the divine Logos is going to come into a fallen world, He must come in a way in which his holiness will not consume the world, but in which His mercy and grace will save and intercede for it. And therefore, the Logos coming in an earthy way, the message of that coming will be a very earthy message carried by a very earthy messenger, even though that earthy messenger is sent by God himself. And all of that earthiness makes the divine Logos “hidden in plain sight” ... invisible to the naked eye, undetectable to the eye and known only by faith.

John comes declaring that the Logos is coming, - but if such divinity cannot be held by the eye, but may only be received by believing the message, then John is sent that “all might *believe through him.*” God doesn’t give you faith in the Logos through a tingly feeling, but through the plainly spoken message that the Logos is coming into the world. Through the message of this messenger, all might have hope, certain hope clinging to a certain word, that the Logos was indeed coming into the world, bringing with Him light for our darkness and life over our death.

But, this coming is not received by all – “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him (and, thus, one would think the creation would know its creator), yet the world did not know him.” Why not? Because the created is not looking for the Logos to look like one of his creation, nor to be ushered in by an opening act that looks like John! No matter the promise of his coming, no matter how desperate the world is for his coming, that’s not how the world would do it. The world would rather be destroyed by the impressiveness of the holy than be saved by the humility of the merciful. But, *more* than the world’s disinterest in this coming Logos...

“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” His own people ignored the coming once eagerly awaited. Had not the protoevangelium – that first Gospel of the coming Christ – echoed throughout Eden? – “He shall come and crush your head,

Satan, and you shall strike his heel!” Had not the prophets proclaimed the divine utterances about the coming Logos to the people of God for generation upon generation? Was not the Old Covenant all about anticipating that the Messiah would come to His people? But such divine things, such thoughts of the divine Logos coming into the world, they don’t equate with a baby in a manger, a son of a carpenter, a man able to garner and sustain the interest of only a small group of followers, a wrongly-convicted enemy of Rome hanging on the cross, a spoken Word, a watery adoption, a feast the main course of which is bread and wine. None of those things amount to the cosmic images eager hearts and minds painted about the Logos: “That’s not what the Messiah should look like – what a let-down and disgrace to our line” God’s own people said, and they did not receive him.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name” – notice that! How is the divine Logos received in this world? Not by sight – for who can behold the divine Logos and live? Or who can behold him in flesh and blood and make sense of it? Or who can learn of the Sacrament of the Altar and *feel* it forgiving their sins? No, the divine Logos and his grace are not received by sight, but by “believing in his name”... that is to say, believing the report that comes from the messenger that the Messiah is coming into the world with all of his plans and promises and we have every reason to find life and light in his name... and what is that name of this

messiah? As we heard from Revelation last week, “His name is called ‘the Word of God,’ the Logos of God.” To believe that the divine Logos has come to earth in flesh and blood, bringing with him his life and light for you... that is what it means to receive him. This same evangelist’s little epistle says it this way, “By this you know the Spirit of God (in other words, ‘by this you know the Spirit is creating faith’): every spirit (little ‘s’ spirit, every soul) that confesses that Jesus Christ *has come in the flesh* is from God (is born of the big ‘s’ Spirit).”

Yes, to those who, by the work of the Holy Spirit, believed in this Logos having come into the world – the person who is Jesus the long-awaited Messiah – to those who believed in *his* name, “he gave the right to become children of God.”

That’s a remarkable claim: you who believe in the name of the Logos, His righteousness and merit and status before God gives *you* the right – not the privilege, not the benefit, not the good graces – but the *right* (the ἐξουσία – the authority, the conferred power) to become children of God. Being children of God evades us of our own strength; by our own strength we are children of darkness and God’s wrath. But, with Christ as our light and our life, not even the Father could (if he desired) refuse us. The Logos says, “By me, you have light and life, you have a relationship *toward* the Father, you have oneness with him... for what is mine is yours. You have my authority to claim the forgiveness of your sins, you have my authority to apply baptismal waters of adoption, you have *my*

authority – you may appeal *to me*,” he says “ – and thereby be certain of your status as children of God.”

And, if we are children of God, then the Light coming into the world shines on **us**, and His life is **our** life. Notice how, even before explaining *how* this Word came into the world, John’s gospel explains the benefit is *for you*. That makes this mysterious beginning of John’s gospel all the more amazing... it’s all *for you*, as the creed so joyfully confesses, “Who for us men *and for our salvation*, came down from heaven.” It’s just as John says at the end of His gospel, “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing *you may have life in his name*.” What good is the cosmic event of the coming of the Logos if we are simply awestruck bystanders? What good, regardless of what it might mean *to us*, what good if it means nothing *for us*? What good, if we confess “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom (by this Logos) all things were made”... but then can’t confess, “Who for us men and for our salvation....” And yet, our text explains without a doubt, this benefit is so divine, so ‘cosmic,’ so sin- and earth-shattering, that it cannot come by flesh or by the will of man, but – for you – it has indeed come by the will and work of God!

Of course, that piques our curiosity: “If this all –my adoption as son, stemming from the coming of the Logos – if this is all the

work of God's will, then how did He do it? How did the Logos come into the world?

How this Word came into the world we will focus on next week, but – for tonight – what comfort for those who hope in his name that “the true light... was coming into the world.” What joy, that 2000 years ago, at a moment and place in history, God proved that He had not forsaken His covenant, had not forgotten His promise, but He acted on moved on His promises and literally ‘gave us His Word,’ ... what comfort that His Word, the true light, with his true life, was coming into the world... that we – though flesh and blood – might, against all laws of flesh and blood, against all laws and will of man, against all laws of the cosmos – we might – by the will of God – be made his children.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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