

## **Christmas Day**

*John 1:1, 14*

*“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.”*

*“Sing, my tongue, of the mystery of the glorious Body, and of the precious Blood shed to redeem the world by the King of all peoples, the fruit of a noble womb.” – Thomas Aquinas*

**Goal: Let the Christmas people of God praise Him for His grace, revealed for the ages in the Incarnation of His Son. Behold, the mystery of the ages has come!**

### **Introduction**

*[Michael Card’s ... “In the beginning was the Word ...”]*

Well, it has arrived! Are you excited? Did you help drive up stocks in Amazon and eBay? All the lists twice-checked now fulfilled? Are there presents under your tree? Does everyone know what he or she is getting? Though not feeling it so much this year, I’m like a child around this time of year. For all its turmoil and chaos, I love this day.

Yet, I have to admit, at times, there isn’t much of a mystery to the season for me. On one level, I’ve gotten it down to a science, even had the kids in on it when they were younger ... the wife, too. Ask Eddie what he wants for Christmas ... Eddie tells them ... wife, kids, sis, and brother-in-law purchase and send the gift ... Eddie pretends he’s not too sure (wink!) ... the presents get opened on Christmas Day ... Eddie looks surprised ... Eddie smiles ... then, enjoys!

Like I said, not much of a mystery here!

Where, isn’t it interesting that there is so much in life that is that way ... that there seems less and less out there that is a mystery. Now, I don’t mean to suggest that there are no longer things to invent, diseases to cure, or galaxies to explore. But even as sure as we discover new things, it doesn’t take long for the world to come to know about it. I mean with the ever-growing advent of ways to communicate, there is not much you can’t learn something about, and with very little effort. Things are more known than they ever have been.

So you have to understand my surprise when I got this package in the mail. I mean it's really got me baffled. With no clue who it's from, it looks innocent enough, but it's got me stumped because it's not anything that asked for, or am expecting. In fact, truth be told, Christmas has been a bit of downer for me – no usual Christmas movies or CD's. Barely got any presents bought. So, this really seems ... a mystery!

What do you think?

Well, given we don't open our presents at home until after this morning's service (the kids used to hate that!), I don't suppose it would do to peek, do you think? As it is a mystery gift – and worship is almost over. What's this? "Look inside grocery bag for clues."

Well, let's check it out! *(Let folks pull out a clue.)*

Well, that was the last one ... so, let's try and put them all together, and see if we can come up with what might be in this package ... solve the mystery ... what do you think?

Who ... *(ask questions from the statements)?*

Well, that's no real mystery is it? Like in God's Word, where He's given us many clues about His plan to save His people. Prophets told about the birth of Jesus long before it became a reality. The Bible also tells us that Jesus would suffer and die and rise from the dead. The Bible also tells us that Jesus return again to judge all people.

That's what this season is all about – His coming to us in a simple word of forgiveness ... in simple words on a page ... in simple water, bread and wine. Yes, Jesus came once, but He continues to come to us in beauty and splendor.

The sad thing is that there are still so many people who are in the dark about the love of God in Christ Jesus. There are still so many that have no clue as to what the faith of Christians is all about. But if they can see the clues ... if there is someone to show them and to tell them, they can know. O, let's just unwrap the present! *(Unwrap the package ... open to the ribbon @ John 1:14 ... read.)*

In the Word of the Lord, the mystery of who Jesus was and is, is revealed. The mystery of God's love is revealed for all to see. To see, one thing, and one thing only ... Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus. He is God's gift of love to the world. His Son, our Savior from sin.

*["In the beginning was the Word/And the Word was with God/And the Word was God ..."]*

In a recent article, Gene Veith reminds his readers of the power of mystery in the hymn of Christmas. In fact, some of them, he states are downright "eerie." For instance, just ponder the opening stanza of Stephen Starke's Christmas hymn, "O Sing of Christ," which we will sing. Or the hymn by Paul Gerhardt, no longer in our hymnal: "O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is." Listen to the first stanza:

*"O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is/My paradise at which my soul reclineth.  
For there O Lord, doth lie the Word/Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace foreshineth."*

Yes, behold the mystery! Wherein, God's gift to us at Christmas is not a tie ... or love ... or even joy. It is a Child, of whom the Athanasian Creed says came into our world "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood into God" the quintessential expression of God's love for you and me ... a God who "*so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

**Wherein, far too often we feel as though we must be the creators of Christmas ... that the glory of the day depends on the family traditions or the size of the anticipated gifts, or dinner. Yes, think of all we do to get ready for this day. Where, this self-generated glory only serves to get in the way of the real mystery that is revealed to us, one given in grace, unveiled and unwrapped in the coming of the Son of God**

**Behold, the mystery! A mystery not subject or confined to times and season, but one for the ages ... the gift of God that is able to establish and keep us for eternity. This is no "tinsel". It will not tarnish. It dare not be discarded with the day's trash. Where, our loving Lord makes preparations, too ... getting us ready. In hope of *His* coming in Word and Sacrament we now live, move, and have our being. In Him we stand forgiven and forgiving ... all in the sure and certain hope that "*He is able to establish you by the Gospel ... and He will do it!*"**

*["In the beginning was the Word/And the Word was with God/And the Word was God/And the Word became flesh/And the Word became flesh/And dwelt among us."]*

In the coming of this Word, the mystery is revealed. Merry Christmas, and a blessed New Year! *Amen.*