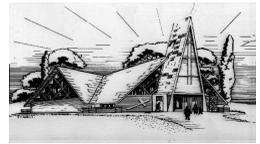




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Christmas Day

The Light shines in the darkness!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 1,1-18:

- **ESV** ¹ In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was turned toward God, and the Word was God.
- ² He was in the Beginning, turned toward God.
- ³ All things came to pass through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came to pass. What has come to pass
- ⁴ in Him was life, and the Life was the Light of men.
- ⁵ Indeed, the Light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not been able to put it out.
- ⁶ There appeared a man having been sent as a messenger from God. His name was John.
- ⁷ This man came for witness, that is, to bear witness to the Light, so that all might come to believe [the Light] through him.
- ⁸ He himself was not the Light, but [he came] to bear witness to the Light.
- ⁹ [The Word] was the real Light, who, coming into the world, casts light upon every person.
- ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world had come to be through Him, and yet the world did not acknowledge Him.
- ¹¹ He came to His own land, but His own people did not accept him.
- ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, that is, to those who believe in His Name,
- ¹³ who [were begotten] not by natural descent nor from carnal desire nor from the will of man, but were begotten from God.
- ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory that belongs to the only [Son] from the Father, “The Full Gift of the Truth.”
- ¹⁵ John bears witness to Him and cries out, saying, “This is the one of whom I said, ‘He who is following me has become my superior, because in comparison to me He was [always] first.’ ”
- ¹⁶ For from His fullness we have all received, indeed, a gift in place of a gift.
- ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses, [but] the gift of the Truth came to pass through Jesus Christ.
- ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The only [Son], Himself God, who exists in the bosom of the Father, He is the one who has made [the Truth] known.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts for the Word that reveals to us the insight of the birth of Your Son, our Lord, and gives us certainty in our hearts which results in joy of salvation! Amen.*

• Dear Israel of God!

- There is a true story of a Muslim Imam, that is like a priest of the Muslims, a man from India, who studied 10 years to become an Imam. Not long after he had become an Imam, while he was preaching and mentioning that according to him Jesus was not the Son of God, a young man stood up, out of the crowd, not a Christian, who asked him the following question: Who is this Jesus?
- This hit him, because he had never looked into what the Koran said about Jesus. So he went and read through the Koran and made an astonishing discovery. Jesus was mentioned 25 times in the Koran but Mohammed only 4 times. What did the Koran say about Jesus? I will only mention these two things: That Jesus is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. This thing that Jesus is the Word of God really got him hooked. He ran back to the teacher who had taught him for ten years and asked him about these things. He asked, how did God create the universe? His teacher said: Through His Word. Then Mario asked his teacher, is the Word of God Creator or Creation? He reasoned like this: The Koran says Jesus is the Word of God. If the Word is Creator Jesus is the Creator and all Muslims must become Christian, because that is what the Koran says. If his teacher would say the Word is Creation then how did God create the Word, because he had said that God created everything through the Word. The teacher would be trapped. Realising that he was trapped, the teacher became quite angry and pushed him out of his room shouting that the Word is neither creator nor creation. So Mario started to read the Bible and found a group of Roman Catholic Christians where he attended Bible-studies. When his father found out about it, he locked him up for 20 days and wanted to kill him, but through a miracle he escaped to be able to tell others that Jesus is the Word of God! His parents ceremonially buried him, dug a grave and all, on the day of his Baptism. Let us not forget what some people have to suffer because they confess the Truth as we enjoy our family times as Christians!
- This little story shows how [5] *“indeed, the Light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not been able to put it out.”* Somehow what John wrote here in the beginning of his Gospel found its way into the Koran, which was written about 500 years later. Jesus is the Word of God. The Word of God is creator not part of creation! This Word of God through whom God created everything, the whole universe, became flesh, was born. No one has ever seen God. It is only the Son who made the Truth known. Jesus shows us His Father through His Word.

• Verse 9 says “[*The Word*] was the real Light, who, coming into the world, casts light upon every person.” (Present tense verb). This means, as you hear the Word speaking, now, He casts light on you! This is not only historical stuff. It happens now! You are in the Light of the Word at this very moment. Either you hate Him or you love Him. Either you believe in Him and what He says or you reject Him and remain in darkness. He comes to enlighten you, to save you, but if you reject this Light you will remain or fall back into darkness, as Paul says, into narrow-mindedness. Darkness means, you will not know the heavenly Father, you will not come to see the true glory of God.

• [10-11] “*He was in the world, and the world had come to be through Him, and yet the world did not acknowledge Him. He came to His own land, but His own people did not accept him.*”

• The mission of the Light in the world was confronted by a hostile darkness that in the end brought the Light to the cross. It is the character of darkness to resist the light, for when light shines into the darkness, it is the darkness which must retreat and eventually disappear altogether. [3,19] “*This is the judgement—that the Light has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the Light*”. *This is the tragedy which we see all around us in the world!* Humankind, by default, loves the darkness more than the light! Humankind does not want that everything it thinks and does comes to light, is exposed! It does not want to be reminded of its utter sinfulness! It wants to cover up! It wants to hold onto its deceptions.

• The world that experiences this true Light shining into it is placed into an immediate crisis by His coming! That is why He was not acknowledged by them! We have to see, that the world stands for everyone and everything that stands in opposition to the Light. When the Truth comes, the lie stands exposed. To try and save itself from the Light, the world went into opposition of the truth. Instead of confession of sins it tries to reject the Truth with everything at its disposal!

• Yet, although the coming of the Light brings forth judgement, it was not for that reason that the Light was sent into the world. The sending of the Light was to give light to man, to take away his sin, and to give him eternal life, to allow him to participate in the eternal family of God!

• So, the Son was sent precisely into such a world of sin! The Word became flesh is

then, the Word assumed to Himself the spiritual conflict between God and world, between God and those who are governed by an alien father, satan.

• But, He didn't come to fight back on worldly terms, He came to absorb onto Himself the hatred of the world. By absorbing the hatred of the world He was also absorbing onto Himself the destiny of sin, which is death. In the crucified Son lies that peace which the world cannot give and eternal life. The death of the Son is the manifestation of the love of the Father.

• This love of the Father, the Light shining in the darkness, was not only rejected, but some received Him. So, the coming of the Light also results in the coming of a new Israel, consisting of those who are begotten as children by God. They are born from above, by water and the spirit, not [13] *“by natural descent nor from carnal desire nor from the will of man”*. In Baptism we have become the children of God.

• The Word, who was the real Light, became flesh so that those who are flesh yet received the Light could participate of the Light and become lights in the world!

• Those who participate in the real Light shine into the world and in this way the Light continues to shine in the world. What does this mean? Each and everyone of you have something to say to the world, to the people around you, to those who are down and out, to those sitting in darkness. I want to stress this very much today, the Gospel you have heard and learned is clear. Jesus came to handout His light, His word of forgiveness to all people.

• It is important to say it, to speak it to those who need it. Don't think they know it in any case. Share it with them as the clear Word of God. You have something to give because you have received the Light. You participate in the Light. You know the Father. You know the Will of the Father. You know the good news! You have something to say in this world and you have mercy to give! The Light is the Word. This Word shines into the darkness through the many little lights who speak it in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, like the Gospel-writers, like Mario, like you and you and ... all of you! Amen.

• *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. [Phil 4,7].*