25 December 2022 St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
The Nativity of Our Lord Vienna, VA

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"A Talking Baby?"
Text: Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14

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

We heard in the reading from Hebrews this morning:
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.

Or John put it this way:
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh.

Today is not only the birth of Jesus, the birth of the Son of God in human flesh, the birth of our Saviour . . . it *is* all that, *but more*. Today, **God is speaking to us by His Son**.

Now, babies can't talk. We all know that. But *this one* says a whole lot.

Now, it's frustrating when someone speaks but you cannot understand them. Sometimes it's a language thing - they're speaking a language you don't know, like Spanish, or German, or Chinese. Or maybe it's a vocabulary thing - you know the language, but not *those* words! They're speaking with words waaay over your head, or slang that you're not familiar with. Or it could be the speaker isn't communicating clearly. You know the language and the words, but he or she is not putting them together well; so what they are saying doesn't make sense.

Well how about God speaking? Do you understand *Him*?

Honestly, sometimes, the answer is NO! isn't it? That verse from Hebrews said that ***God spoke to our fathers by the prophets***. And some of those prophets . . . we hear them, we read them, and they're hard to understand. Maybe we don't know the history or the historical circumstances they were speaking to. Maybe it's a translation thing from Hebrew to English. Maybe it's how they speak. But many things God spoke through the prophets in the Old Testament are hard for us to understand. We *want* to. We *need* to. But . . .

Or maybe we wish God would speak to us now like He did to the people back then. Like

He did to Moses in a burning bush. Or to Abraham when those three visitors came to him. Or in visions and dreams. Then we would understand! Then we would know!

I'm not so sure we'd like all that! That might fall into the category of be careful what you wish for! But in any case, that time is past. Now, in these last days, God is speaking differently. ***In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son***. And while babies can't speak, this one speaks volumes.

For here, in the manger, the Creator lies as a creature. And not just any creature, but one of us. And not just one of us, but a tiny, helpless, baby.

Here, in the manger, the Lord God, the commander of the army of angels, the one whom the angels worship, has become a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5).

Here, in the manger, the one who cares for all creation, keeps the planets and stars in their place, knows the number of hairs on your head and every sparrow that falls to the ground (Matthew 10:29-30), receives the care of a human mother and father.

Here, in the manger, the Son of God is now also the son of Mary, like us in every way except without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

No other god would do this. There is no myth, no legend, nothing in the tales and stories of any other god like this. Those gods sit aloof. Those gods demand you serve them. Those gods don't want to get themselves dirty. Those gods care only about themselves and what they can get from you.

Not this God. Not the true God. Who cares only about you and what He can do *for* you and give *to* you. Who comes down from heaven and gets dirty - dirty with our sin. Who has come not to demand from you but to serve you. And who doesn't sit aloof, but, as we just sang, *joins us and our children in our weakness* (LSB #372 v. 2).

So what is this child speaking with all this? **How greatly God doth love you!** How much? This much. That word is being proclaimed loud and clear this day. ***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us***.

But still, it's hard to understand, isn't it? That God would love us so? Us sinners. Us rebels. We who do what He has told us not to do, and don't do what He has told us to do. We who have ruined His good and perfect creation. We who are selfish, who fail, who fall. We who forget to pray, or think we don't have the time, and who don't even think about God much of the day. That God would do this for us, send His Son for us, come to serve us and save us . . . *why*?

Because that's who He is. A God who loves. A God who *is* love. And in the manger He is

revealing himself to us. How He wants to be known. How He wants to be seen. The God who gives Himself to us in the wrapping paper of swaddling clothes, not under a tree but in a manger, and not just one gift among many, or a gift that will soon be obsolete, but the one we need the most.

But, I have to tell you, full disclosure - this child isn't here only to *give* to you. Oh no - He is here to *take* from you. He's not going to let you keep everything you have. He's going to take from you, too. He's going to take your sin. He's going to take your death. He's going to take your condemnation. He's going to take *everything* in you that separates you from God. And, as we also heard from the reading from Hebrews today, ***after making purification for sins*** - your sins, and *all* of them, each and every one - ***he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*** - meaning, after dying for your sins as the sacrificial lamb, the Lamb of God, He rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of His Father, where He rules and reigns over all. But not just like He did before, as God. For He is not like He was before. Now, as He was in the manger, as He was on the cross, so He is on the throne - both God and man. Your God *and your brother*. Your blood brother. Your flesh brother. He's the one now on the throne! As your brother forever. For ***the Word***, the eternal Word, the Son of God, ***was made flesh***. Was made your brother. And not just for a time, but forever. That you be children of God, not just for a time, but forever.

That, as John said, is ***the light that shines in the darkness***. The light of truth that shines in the darkness of sin. The light of love that shines in the darkness of hate. The light of unity that shines in the darkness of division. The light of life that shine in the darkness of death. And ***the darkness has not***, could not, and cannot ***overcome it***. This baby is greater than all the forces of evil. And He is born **for you**.

That's what God is speaking to you today through His Son.

The Son who will also in a moment say to you, *Take and eat, this is My Body; Take and drink, this is My Blood*. The same Body and Blood held by Mary in her arms. The same Body and Blood that lay in the manger. The same Body and Blood that hung on the cross. The same Body and Blood that then rose from the dead. That Body and Blood I give to you, this child says, to love you with My forgiveness, and raise you with My life. That not sin, death, or hell ever separate you from Me.

That's what God is speaking to you today through His Son. Through this baby in the manger. A baby who cannot talk, yet is saying an awful lot!

And to this we sang in response:

The world may hold
Her wealth and gold;

But Thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true treasure.
To Him hold fast
Until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure (LSB #372 v. 6).

Until we see our Christmas gift, our Brother, our Saviour, face-to-face, and receive that last gift, greater than all: *eternal life*.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.