



**Sermon: God's Great Surprise - The Word Among Us! – Todd Goldschmidt**

Christmas Day Service 10:15 am – December 25<sup>h</sup>, 2011 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

**Sermon Text: John 1:1-14 – (NIV 1984)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

<sup>6</sup> There came a man was sent from God; his name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and through the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of the grace and truth.



**Sermon: God's Great Surprise – The Word Among Us! – Todd Goldschmidt**

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In Greek mythology, the gods and goddesses often took on human form. Their flesh-and-blood disguises enabled them to walk and talk with mortals and to keep an eye on the world. After all, they didn't want anyone disrupting their hopes, dreams and plans! They put different human appearances on and off as it suited them. Sometimes, it was to fight a war; other times, to seduce a lover. They could manipulate events and people to satisfy their emotional needs and desires. Rather than being a good thing for mankind or for the world, when the Greek gods or goddesses got mixed up in human affairs it usually spelled trouble—big trouble! Divine power, immortality and sin make for a toxic cocktail. That's what happens when deities are crafted in man's image.

How different was the incarnation of our LORD! "The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us." The divine Son of God took on a human nature and entered our world in the womb of His virgin mother, Mary. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. As a man, He was as weak and helpless as any newborn. He willingly chose to lay aside His immortality and put on our mortality. He wasn't simply seeking a "human experience" by which He could manipulate others in order to satisfy His sinful cravings. No, He came for a far higher, far better purpose. The perfect God became true man in order to give His life in death for us. He crawled into our skin, bore our infirmities and carried our sins, so that we might "become children of God—children born not of natural descent, or of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." Instead of making gods in our image, you and I are being remade in the image of God!

But let's rewind a bit on this Christmas morning. It's no surprise to find God "in the beginning," like we do in the first chapter of Genesis. After all, He's uncreated, infinite and eternal. He always has been, is, and always will be. He is without beginning or end. If it were any other way, He wouldn't be God. Everything else—everything that's not God, visible or invisible—is part of His creation. For Moses wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." He made it out of nothing, simply speaking all things into existence by His all powerful Voice. God said, "Let there be," and there was, plain and simple.



Like Genesis, the Gospel of John begins before creation with the opening words of our text: “In the beginning was the Word.” Prior to creation, when there was nothing besides God, there was God’s Word. “The Word was with God,” John adds. At this point, the Word and God are two distinct Persons. But there’s more! John concludes, “and the Word was God”—uncreated, infinite and eternal God. Separate, but equal; individual, yet one in essence—God and the Word. Through the Word, “all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” He was the agent through whom God spoke the entire creation into being, “like a craftsman at his side” as Scripture says in Proverbs 8:30. Light and life have their beginning and source in Him. The eternal Word was there when the sun came into being . . . and snow and evergreen trees . . . and reindeer and mankind, too. He was present, “rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind” (Prov. 8:31). And it was all so very, very good—all that the Son and Father had made.

Fast forward, now, from “the beginning” of time to the present, and it’s clear that things are far different. Darkness, thick darkness, and deep gloom cover the whole world like a heavy blanket.

The world of today doesn’t know God. It’s spiritually ignorant and morally blind to its own sins, weaknesses and shortcomings. It can’t recognize its Maker, even though His imprint is still evident in the beauty, order and complexity of creation. With the single word, “darkness,” John describes mankind’s fall into sin, and its devastating results for all creation. That word captures the confusion and chaos, the misunderstandings and mindless pursuits of men, the futility and the frustration of our world. “Darkness” means that man can’t find God, no matter how many times he bumps his head into the stuff God made. He’s lost, disoriented, alienated and constantly inventing false gods and false worship to fill the void and emptiness inside, “worshipping and serving created things rather than the Creator” as Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans (1:25).

If the creation were to be redeemed—bought back from its bondage to sin and Satan, death and hell—God would have to take the initiative. He’d have to make Himself known, point Himself out, reveal Himself to us in some unmistakable manner. But how would He do it? God would come to the place where we are, descend to earth, enter His creation, so that we lost, condemned creatures might know Him & His love for us; so that we might have communion with Him again. This is the great surprise and wondrous mystery of Christmas. God shows up in a place where we certainly don’t expect to see Him: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” The divine Word of God who made all things in the beginning became fully human like you and me. The Uncreated became a creature; the Infinite became limited and body-bound; the Eternal became subject to time. The Word became flesh: Jesus, the Christ, true God and true man in one, unique, indivisible Individual. What a surprise:



## **MAN CAN NO LONGER FIND THE CREATOR, SO THE CREATOR BECAME MAN!**

The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. John writes of Jesus, “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” He is the light of the world, the light that shines in our darkness, the light no darkness can overcome! On this Christmas morning, do you recognize your Maker? Do you see your salvation, “wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger”? There He is! There is your light and your life, your hope and your consolation, your power and your peace! There He is, being nursed and burped, changed and cuddled, held and beheld like any newborn. There He is, the Ancient of Days, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, great David’s greater Son. There *He* is . . . the One you call Lord, the One you confess your sins to and look to for pardon, the One who has promised to be with you always and who has pledged to work all things out for your good. There He is, the One who lives to intercede for you in heaven, the One who will return at the end of earthly time, on the Last Day of creation, to raise you to life, clothe you with a glorified body and usher you into His eternal kingdom of “the new heavens and the new earth”!

The One who made the forests and snow-capped peaks, also came with arms outstretched on a wooden cross upon a hill called Calvary. There the Creator of heaven and earth suffered and bled and died for His creation. The One in whom we “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) was hastily wrapped in linen and rested in a tomb, bursting forth on the third day as the firstborn Son of the new creation. He who made the wheat and the vine, comes to you still in the bread and wine of His Holy Supper, mysteriously and miraculously feeding your spirit with His true body and blood. He who formed the molecular structure of H<sub>2</sub>O, connects that simple substance to the super-natural transformation of sinners into saints in the sacred act of Holy Baptism. The Eternal Life, the Light of the Word—is so near to you that you can taste Him and feel Him, touch Him and be touched by Him, as if you were there on that first Christmas morning long ago.

By the powerful working of God’s Spirit, you and I “have received him,” we have “believed in his name,” and so we’ve been given “the right to become . . . children . . . born of God”! What a blessing on Christmas morning to be God’s dear daughters and sons and receive, by faith, the greatest gift of all: the gift of His newborn Son; the eternal Word made flesh; your Savior and mine! For God the Word who was in the beginning is now and forever incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. That’s what makes every Christmas & each new day such a blessed surprise: the uncreated, eternal, infinite God comes right here among us as our light and our life. What a joy! Amen.