

December 6, 2017 – John 1:1-5

Advent is a time of beginnings. If you're not aware, the church calendar doesn't follow the civil calendar. In the church, New Year's Day isn't on January 1st. It's on the First Sunday in Advent. Which we celebrated a few days ago. So this is the beginning of a new year for us.

Which makes sense, in a way. Because Advent and Christmas are also when we celebrate other beginnings. The beginning of Christ's incarnate life and ministry on earth. The beginning of our new life of faith found in God's Son, come down for us. So much of who we are as Christians began when Christ was born.

But this evening, we go back even further. Before Christmas morning. Before God first promised the Savior. Before... everything. We go back to the very beginning of all things. The beginning of Creation.

Our Advent series this year is called "The Word Became Flesh," and in it we'll be working our way through John 1. Studying the way John rather poetically describes the incarnation of our Lord. But John doesn't start at Christmas morning. He doesn't start by talking about stables and mangers. Angels and shepherds. The virgin Mary and faithful Joseph. No, John starts with Creation.

"In the beginning." You don't use that phrase unless you want people to think about Genesis 1. It's quite possibly the most recognizable three words in all of Scripture.

John is telling us that everything he's about to write – this entire gospel of Jesus Christ – stretches all the way back to the beginning. It didn't have its start with Jesus' conception or his birth or his baptism. Despite the fact that that's where the other Gospel writers chose to begin.

No, the Gospel of Jesus Christ had its start before the Creation of the world. Before time began. Before there were even people to save, the foundation for our salvation was laid. And we see that demonstrated in three key ways.

First, John says, in the beginning was the Word. Now, he will later spell out for us that the Word was God. But if you remember Genesis 1:1, you already knew that. Because in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

That's actually kind of a mind-blowing thing to say, isn't it? In the beginning... God. In the beginning, before there was a universe, before time began, there was still... God.

Who, according to John, is the Word. Which kinda makes sense. Because how did God create the world? He spoke. With words.

Which is something he didn't have to do. He's God. He can make things in whatever way he wants. But, because he's the Word, it's in his nature to create with words.

And that's pretty important for us. God speaks to his creation. Not just to communicate facts and information. But to create through speaking. To create through his Word.

And he's been doing it since time began. As Lutherans, we like to keep things very systematic. Very neat and tidy. And so, when we talk about the three persons of the Trinity, we say that the Father is our creator and the Son is our redeemer and the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier. And it's all very organized.

Which is all well and good... except that it's not really true. Because the Son is our creator too. We were made by the Word of God. All things were made through the Word of God. Without him was not made anything that was made. Because God creates through his Word. The Father creates through the Son. They can't really be separated.

Which is why it's also inaccurate to say that the Son is our redeemer, but the Father, somehow, isn't. The Father is our redeemer too. He redeems us through the Word. He creates new hearts in us through the Word. He creates faith in us through the Word. He brings us back to life through the Word. Through his Son. Again, they can't be separated.

And so the Father and the Son together create the World. God and His Word make all that has been made. And what is the very first thing they make? Light.

Which is also important for us. Because, you'll notice, God didn't say, "Let there be light and darkness." He just said, "Let there be light."

Darkness, in terms of Genesis, isn't really a thing. It's an absence of a thing. Before God created anything, there was a formless void and it was dark. So that's what darkness really is. The absence of God's creation. The absence of God's Word.

And that's what the world was before God created anything. An absence. A void. And then God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. Because not only did God's Word have the power to create light. But God's Word itself is light. The moment God spoke, there was something in this formless void, this dark absence. And so it had form. It was no longer void and absent. It was light.

It was so light that God had to separate light and darkness, so that there would actually be times that weren't filled with light. So that there could actually be night and a time for sleep and a new day. God's light, God's Word, was everywhere. It filled all of creation.

Until that moment when it didn't. When humanity believed the word of Satan over the Word of God. At that moment, there was darkness. Darkness in our own hearts. Because we had rejected the Word of God, the Light of God. And so there was an formless void, a dark absence, created inside of us.

That we've tried to fill ever since. That we've tried to fill with sin and desire. That we've tried to fill with the devil's temptations and our own self righteousness. We substituted God's Word for a lie. And we've been filled with darkness ever since.

And here's the thing about light and darkness that's also important: light is the basis for life. Even the most secular scientists will tell you that. Light. Heat. Energy. You have to have these things to have life. Even the deepest caves with animals that live in perpetual darkness, still need the fruits of light to survive. Still need at least a little heat and little fuel to live.

We see it in Genesis as well, in the order of creation. Every day of God's creation builds on the others. Light, then air, then land and plants, then the sun, moon, and stars, then birds and fish, then animals and then, finally, man. But it all starts with light. It all starts with that first Word of God in the darkness.

Take away light, and it all falls apart. Take away that Word, and there's only death. Death, like that which came to Adam and Eve and all their descendants after the Fall. Death, like that which is inside of us from the moment we are conceived.

But in him, in Jesus, *"was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* John takes us back to the beginning of all things because that's where God's Word first spoke. That's where God's light first shined. That's where God's life was first breathed into existence. And that's where it all soon fell apart.

And the Gospel is the story of God undoing that damage. Of recreating us just as we were first created. We rejected God's Word for a lie, so the Word became flesh and dwelt among. We had hearts filled with darkness, so the Light of God shined in the darkness, in a way that couldn't possibly be overcome. Rather than be men of light, we became creatures of death, born in spiritual death and condemned to the grave. So the Son of God came and brought us life by giving up his own. Life like we had in the beginning.

All things were once made through him. And, thanks be to God, all things are still made and remade through him, even today. And until the end. Amen.