



“Whoever believes the Word overlooks the one who is preaching it” (By Faith Alone: a daily devotional: Martin Luther for Christmas Day). Luther was speaking about many who claim they would believe the Christmas message if they had heard it directly from an angel as did the shepherds at the announcement of Christ's birth. The point Luther makes is true: God's Word accomplishes its purpose (**Isaiah 55:10-11**). The Gospel promised (**Genesis 3:15**) becomes reality when **“the Word became flesh...” John 1:14**. Forgiveness of sins becomes reality by the death of that same child born in Bethlehem the Promised Savior, Jesus. The resurrection is the Father's acceptance of His Son's sacrifice for the sins of the world; the message of the Gospel is made ours through God's work of Redemption through Christ.

Faith clings to God's Word tenaciously and trusts in God's mercy because the Word is God Himself who came in the flesh to save us. While the world moves along with its naysayers and doubters who despise Christianity and mock because they see no evidence of God or of His promises coming true, we who believe embrace the Christmas message anew every time we hear it. Our faith, which trusts Christ implicitly, is strengthened as we hear God's Word; the message promised in the Old Testament and brought to fruition in the New Testament.

God's Word reveals the long promised Savior, born in Bethlehem is destined for the cross as soon as He takes on human flesh. The One who is the Lamb of God is the One who lays in a manger; God sent Him to be our Redeemer. Through this Child, who will grow to be a Man, God's anger at us for our sin will be laid aside and the righteousness of Christ will be credited to us and our sin placed on Jesus alone on the cross. In God's eternal work of salvation through Christ, His death and resurrection are already as good as done even at His birth; such are the promises of God always fulfilled because He is faithful to His Word, He is our loving and gracious God who answers yes for our salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

In taking on our human flesh, Jesus is the Mediator between God and man who desires no earthly or vain connection with the world but looks to the cross and does the Father's will, that is, to **“seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10)**. Thus, through the mercy of God and as revealed in His sacred Word, the very Word made flesh, the One who is like us in every way, yet without sin, becomes obedient to the Father and Himself is the Divine solution for the human problem of our sinful condition overcoming the disruption between mankind and God the Father. In Jesus, Himself the second Adam, He lives according to God's will in our place and then even though innocent, He dies our death paying our penalty for sin and overcomes our every enemy; sin, death and the devil, thus obtaining for us eternal salvation.

The Collect for Christmas Midnight (The Nativity of Our Lord) is a fitting summation of the gift of God's love come to us through Jesus as it shows us the inheritance won for us through Christ; The Light shining into our dark world.

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth, we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Let us all with gladsome voice
Praise the God of heaven,
Who to bid our hearts rejoice,
His own Son hath given.

O Lord Christ, our Savior dear,
Be Thou ever near us.
Grant us now a glad new year.
Amen, Jesus, hear us!

TLH 97 “Let Us All With Gladsome Voice” Stanzas 1, 4

Donna and I thank you for all your generosity, kindness and care throughout the year. For your gifts, prayers, concern and compassion we thank you with grateful hearts. It is a joy to serve as your pastor in this time and this place according to the Lord's will as we work together in God's Kingdom of Grace to the glory of His Name using the gifts God bestows on each of us both individually and corporately for the furtherance of His Kingdom.

We pray for God's continued blessings on all of you and your families as we finish 2022 and look forward to God's gracious favor in 2023 trusting in His protection, care and nurture as we all serve our Savior Jesus Christ.

In Christ, Pastor