



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 25, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

The Festival of the Nativity of Our Lord

First Lesson: [Exodus 33:18-23, 34:5-7](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 1:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 1:1-18](#)

The Glory of the Lord Shines!

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Lord who has come in the flesh: Amen.

The old saying was always "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." The fact is that people can say things and people would say that so that whatever you said to them, if it was an insult, then you were trying to say it's not as important as it was. It's true that words don't hurt us in the same way that some physical things can hurt us, but we know that words are powerful. A word said in a certain way to certain people can be very devastating, or it could bring a lot of joy. Even though you might not do anything physical, words can be abusive. But also a word spoken could bring you some of the greatest joy ever.

Think of the words, "Will you marry me?" Those words are powerful and life changing. Or, "I'm pregnant." The joy of those first words of knowing you're going to have a child. What about on the other side? "I hate you!" Or, we've seen some court cases recently, the thought when you're sitting there waiting and the judge reads "Not guilty." The relief! Or if you hear the word "guilty" and the devastation and knowing that your life has changed forever. Or something many of you maybe have faced when the doctor says that you have cancer. Words are powerful because they are connected to things and they have great power with us.

We are going to see today that words are powerful and how John writes is very powerful because he speaks of grand themes. Not just grand themes but also of these far reaching times and also very specific times. He also speaks about "The Word," The Word become flesh, Jesus, God incarnate, and how He is so powerful. Our God is so loving and merciful. We're going to see how this Word, this Light, this Glory shines. This is what Christmas is all about.

When we look to see where John starts with the Christmas story, he starts so different than all the other writers. He doesn't start talking about Mary and Joseph. He doesn't talk about all the things that are going on in Israel at the time. He actually starts way back at the beginning. His words mirror Genesis when we hear about the creation of the world. In the beginning was God. John says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

He is telling us that (he is going to tell us who this Word is later) Jesus is God and He was with God in the beginning. But even more than this; he tells us how powerful and special Jesus is.

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

John goes way back to the beginning and speaks about Jesus and how He is involved in the Creation, but more than this; he speaks of how Jesus has always been around. This is so hard for us to think about on Christmas because on Christmas Day, Jesus was born. He speaks about how Jesus was around creating the world with God, but He is also the Light shining in the darkness.

There is so much evidence that when God appeared in the Old Testament, when God speaks to people, this is Jesus. Notice when God speaks about who can see Him, He says man cannot see Him. But who can we see? We can see Jesus. So John speaks about Jesus as this Light, this Light that shines in the darkness. He has been here. He has been around and He has been this Light. It's so important that He has been shining and that God continues to shine. But what we see here as he goes way back into the idea of Creation and this grand theme of Jesus creating the world, he has this one sentence that has big impact. He talks about everything being created but then, ***The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*** Simple, right?

Think about that. God created everything. Jesus helped and everything was perfect, but now there is darkness. This simple sentence portrays the world we live in. We live in a world of darkness, a world that is filled with sin, sinful people, trouble, pain, sorrow, cancer, divorce and all the issues you can list. The world is filled with darkness. But the Light shines in the darkness. It's just a simple short sentence, but how powerful and meaningful this is that Jesus and God shines in this darkness. No matter what we face, no matter what we see and experience, the Light is shining in that darkness.

The NIV translates that ***the darkness has not understood it***. You could also translate it in this way. **The darkness has not overcome it**. In a lot of movies we speak about, there is light and there is dark, and they are equal. That's not how it is with God. We know that God has won the battle. Jesus is more powerful than the devil. As much darkness as we feel, as much trouble as we face, we know that the Lord is greater.

We see this darkness but we notice it says ***the darkness has not understood it***. When it talks about Jesus coming, we see something very similar. It talks about John coming to be the witness to Jesus. But then it goes on to tell us a little bit more about Jesus. It says:

He (Jesus) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

Notice what it says here. He came to those who were His own, but His own did not receive Him. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. What is this talking about? Again, as we look at John and as he is writing, we kind of see that he is talking about specific times but also about things that stretch out to maybe our time.

When Jesus came and was born among men, did people understand Him? Do you think as He was growing up people were like, "Oh, there is God"? Even as He was teaching and working with His disciples, there were glimpses where His disciples were in awe with glory and saw Jesus perform miracles and were amazed and thousands crowded around Him, but there are so many times when they were so confused; so confused because mankind struggles with God's glory. The disciples just didn't get it all the time. All those other followers, they struggled to understand who Jesus was and what He came to do. So many people just saw this common person from Nazareth, which was this backwater town where no one special came from. So no one understood Him then and no one understood His mission; that He came to die for us. That is what was especially offensive to the people. Even the disciples...every time Jesus said "I'm here and I've come to show you the Father. Yes, I'm going to die," the disciples were dumbfounded and most of the time they said some of the foolish things where they were talking about their own glory. "Can we have a throne on one of your sides?" Mankind struggles to understand His glory.

John explains it here too. He says:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Where does this faith and understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done for us come from? It comes from God. It comes through the Word. It comes through the Holy Spirit changing and working in our hearts. It comes in when the disciples saw the resurrected Lord and He opened their hearts to understand what it's all about. As John speaks about when Jesus came, He is also speaking about the world today. The world does not understand Him. He came into the world, but the world did not receive Him. Nothing has changed. The world rejects Jesus in so many ways. They don't understand who He is and we live in this darkness. I think it's interesting to think of how this darkness that John talks about fills our lives and distracts us from Jesus. It distracts us from understanding and knowing Him.

Think of how many times outside of church do we have spiritual discussions? If you talk with your friends or family, do you actually talk about Jesus? We're so filled with all the distractions of this world. We can talk about football and politics and Covid and the list goes on and on and on of things that we can talk about, but to understand Jesus and to testify about Jesus, that's what John came to do; to speak about this Light that shines in the darkness and the joy it gives us. It's hard for us. We struggle to understand it and then we're so filled with so many other things that it's hard for us.

Why is it so important? Let's see what Jesus really came to do and who He is.

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 grace and truth.

Jesus came to live among us. I love that word "dwell," to dwell among us. You could say He "tented" among us, which might sound weird, but think about the Tabernacle in the Old Testament. That was God's glory and He came and lived among us. He dwells among us. Jesus in God's full glory is among us. What did He do? He came to give us grace and truth because we are in that darkness. We struggle and every relationship we struggle with, everything that we see in this world that breaks down, it's hard to find truth. It's hard to find grace and forgiveness, but here Jesus comes full of grace and truth.

Later John cries out about Jesus: "This was the One of whom I testified, the One that will surpass me. ***From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.***" The original speaks of it in this way in a little better translation: "grace upon grace we have received from God." Grace upon grace; you are loved and forgiven. We need Jesus to come in the fullness of His glory to be our Savior; to save us from what? To save us even from ourselves, from the darkness that is inside each and every one of us, the darkness that is in this world. We need that grace and truth. The truth of His

Word that comes and tells us who He is and who we are, but comes to tell us who He is and what He has done. He is our Savior, full of grace and truth.

So what do we do? Yes, on Christmas we celebrate and we're filled with joy as we give presents and our families are together. We eat great meals. But Christmas isn't one day, is it? Christmas is celebrating the joy of looking at God; our God who loves you and shows it by coming down to be your Savior and gives you grace and truth and peace and forgiveness that we do not deserve. We know this. We know how we have fallen short. We see His grace and mercy and truth and what do we want to do? What can we do but share it just like John the Baptist; testify about who He is because through Christ, grace and truth come.

What does the world need today, tomorrow, every day? As John spoke about it, from the beginning until now that Light is shining in the darkness and Jesus, in such simple terms as it talks about in Luke, was born as a baby. Just simple words, but the words are so powerful, to know that your Savior has come for you. So we testify. We speak and we love others so that they too may know of this grace and truth. **The Glory of the Lord Shines!** The glory that says you are redeemed and forgiven and you are a child of His. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.