

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord  
St. John 1:1-14  
December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## He Came to His Own

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Today we do NOT celebrate the *birthday* of the Lord + Jesus. We celebrate the *birth* of the Lord. We celebrate that the Lord of Heaven and Earth—the Creator of all things—came down from Heaven and was incarnate as a man. This day is not His birthday, as if He is getting another year older. He Who is eternal, Who was with God and is God from the beginning, does not deserve to have this day treated like some child's birthday party. Those who celebrate this day in such a way miss the point entirely. We do not wish our Lord + Jesus a "Happy Birthday."

What we do celebrate is much more profound. You will notice that the Gospel from last night was more narrative; it told a story—the history—of the events of our Lord's birth. Today the Gospel is more theological in nature. It gets at the very heart of why we celebrate this day, why we ring out the bells, and sing hymns. It draws our faith to the reality about who we are as Christians, and what our Lord Christ has done for us.

St. John the Evangelist writes concerning our Lord + Jesus that "*He came to His own.*" He came to His people. He came to the house of Israel. He came for all mankind. But what is truly remarkable is how and why He came. He came down from Heaven and humbled Himself to be born as one of us. "*He came to His own*" as one of His own. And the point of the incarnation—that God becomes man—is not about Him lowering Himself to our level so that He can be a lowly human, too. The point is that He lowers Himself into our flesh, so that He can raise our flesh up to be level with His heavenly self. He comes to draw all those who believe on His Name into the heavenly realms. He does not come so that we may continue in this sinful flesh. He comes to give us glorified bodies; to give us glorified flesh. He comes to raise us up to be with Him.

In doing this, He takes away all that stands in the way of our receiving this great gift. We live in darkness—the darkness of sin. We are spiritually blind. We cannot see our need for a Savior. Nor, can we see the Savior Himself in our Lord + Jesus. This is how spiritually blind we are. We do not even recognize our own sinfulness and willfulness to be our own gods, and be our own saviors. But, our Lord + Jesus comes to us to take up into Himself our flesh, so that He might fill this flesh with the light of His glory. When He has fulfilled the Law for us, and offered up Himself on the tree of the holy cross, He then raises this flesh out of the grave, and sends to all of us who still remain in the flesh, His Holy Ghost, so that we might be enlightened by the gifts that He won on the cross. Through His Holy Ghost,

He opens our blind eyes to see our sin; to see our Savior in Him alone. He opens our eyes to see that forgiveness, life and salvation are to found in Him alone.

He also comes to bring us out of death into a glorious life with Him. He is the Light and the Life. He is both the Way that points us into Heaven, and He is also the One Who brings our dead flesh back to life. We inherited our sin from the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Adam was created from the dust of the earth. But, on account of his sin all flesh returns to the dust from whence we were created. Our bodies will rest in the grave and turn to dust. Eve also was a part of creation. She was made from the rib of Adam. She was made from the rib that was made from dust, so that all of her offspring are born and doomed to return to dust. Eve may mean “the mother of all living,” but her children all die.

The Lord + Jesus, however, is not created from the flesh of Adam. He was with God and was God from the beginning. He was not created, but He was begotten of the Father from eternity, as we confess in the Creed. Therefore, He does not possess flesh that will turn to dust. He takes on flesh that will shine in glory. Just as He showed throughout His ministry, and to which St. John the Evangelist alludes to, that His glory was beheld by St. John and the rest of the Apostles. His glory was seen in His transfiguration, it was seen at His birth when the angels filled the night sky with the glory of the Lord. The Lord’s glory was witnessed by St. John and the other Apostles throughout His earthly ministry.

This glory that was revealed was a foretaste of the glory that He intends to do with our flesh, that same flesh that He took upon Himself. He intends to remove the dust from us. He intends to bring us out of death and into life eternal with Him. He does this by changing our lowly bodies into the glorious bodies that comes as a result of His taking upon Himself our flesh.

This is what it means for Him to “tabernacle” with us. When the Evangelist St. John writes that the Lord + Jesus “dwelt” with us, he is not simply referring to the fact that he is alive on Earth. No, St. John is making a connection with the tabernacle of meeting—the place where the presence of God with His people takes place. The Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place was where the ark of the covenant was. It was the mercyseat of the Lord God. It was His dwelling place. It was also the place where the High Priest would offer the annual sacrifice of a bull for the sins of the whole people of Israel.

Our Lord + Jesus Christ now becomes that tabernacle. He is now the mercyseat of the Lord God. He is the One to Whom we place our sins before, and the One from Whom we receive forgiveness. Moreover, He is now the High Priest and the once and for all time sacrifice for our sins, and the sins of the whole world. He atoned for the sins of the whole world by His death on the cross, and now all those who cling to this mercyseat—this Throne of Grace—have what they seek: forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

The mercy seat dwells with His people in the flesh of His people. *“He came to His own.”* He came to us to dwell with us—to tabernacle with us. All so that He might fill this dark world with the light of His salvation, and so that He might draw all of us who are dead in our trespasses and sins into eternal life with Him and all the saints and angels in Heaven.

All these things are a profound mystery. The incarnation of our Lord + Jesus Christ is not something that we should treat as trifling, but we should bow the knee and show great respect and honor for what our Lord + Jesus does for us. This is why we do not reduce our Lord God’s becoming a man in our flesh with silliness like birthday parties and birthday cakes. This mystery is much too profound for that. The Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, has come down from Heaven to be one of us; to be one of His creation. He does this for all mankind. He does not do this for any animal; He does take on the flesh of any animal. Nor, does He do this for any angel. He does not become an

angel. No other part of His creation does He deign to become a part of. Only for us, His most beloved creation, does He do this for.

What a wonderful gift to receive on this Christmas day! Our Lord + Jesus comes down from Heaven to be a Baby. He comes to bear our sin, to fulfill the Law, all so that He might draw us into Himself; that He might take us to live with Him in Heaven. Behold, your Lord God, born a Baby to save you, and give you light and life. What a merry mass of Christ it is! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*