

The Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord  
St. John 1:1-14  
December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

### This Man Came for a Witness

*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.

Moses wrote in his First Book of the Pentateuch, commonly called Genesis, that the Lord God created the heavens and earth in the beginning. The beginning of the Earth began in darkness, for Moses writes that “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” This earth that we live on began in darkness. It was empty and void, and it was without form and shape. This was the way that the earth began until the Lord God created the heavens and the earth. Moses writes that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The Earth was in darkness, was without form, and was void, until the Lord God began to create the heavens and the earth.

The first thing our Lord God did for our world was bring light to take away the darkness that encompassed the Earth. The Lord God said—the first words our Lord God spoke to this Earth—was, “Let there be light.” Light filled the darkness of this shapeless and empty deep. The very first thing our Lord God does for our world—for us—is to remove our darkness; to bring us into the light. He fills this world with His Word, which brings light to us and removes our darkness. He takes us out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is an image of the love our Lord God has for us and for His whole creation. He loves us so much that the first thing He does for us is bring us out of the darkness into the light.

On the sixth day of creation, our Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth with His own hands. He breathed into mankind the breath of life; He gave to us His very Spirit. After He gave Adam, the first man, dominion over all living things, and after Adam named them all, and found no suitable helper for him, the Triune Lord God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and took from him a rib and formed woman, the perfect helpmate for man. From then on, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife in wedded matrimony. The Lord God gave Eve, the first woman, to Adam to live into holy matrimony. This was just some of the good things that the Lord God did for His creation. He took them out of darkness and brought them into light. He gave this earth and all things in it to mankind to have dominion over it, and he gave man a woman so that mankind could be fruitful and multiply in this good creation of our Lord God. He even placed them in a perfect garden called, Eden, which means “pleasure.” These are the good things our Lord God does for us, His creation.

In this Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are given to eat from every tree of the garden, but one. They are not to eat from the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our Lord God places our first parents into this perfect creation in a garden called

“pleasure”; He takes this world out of darkness and gives them light, and what do our first parents, Adam and Eve do? Deceived by that serpent the devil, they eat from the tree from which they were forbidden to eat. Our Lord God gives us a perfect creation, takes us out of darkness, and we in our sinfulness return back into the darkness. We forsook the light. We ran back into the darkness. We returned to the place that was without form and was void and filled with darkness. We turned our backs on the Lord God’s gifts to us.

Our Lord God in His foreknowledge knew that His creation would do this. Therefore, before He ever formed the earth; before He filled this world with light; before He made us from the clay of the Earth, He planned for our salvation. He knew that we would run back into the darkness, so He planned to bring us back into the light forever.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Lord God was the Word, and to this dark deep and formless void the Word spoke to “Let there be light” upon it. This light shined in the darkness, but mankind in their sinfulness did not comprehend the light. They preferred the darkness of sin and shame. Our Lord God gave us life—with the breath of His very own Spirit—and we chose death. We chose to sin and live in sin and death all our days. But our Lord God loves His creation—He loves us poor, miserable sinners—so that He would not allow us to remain in the darkness; He would not permit us to remain in sin and death.

Therefore, He sent to us men, the Prophets, to bear witness to the Light—the Light that the Lord God would restore to this world. The final prophet that the Lord God sent to us was a man called John. This man born of Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest, came to be a witness of the Light. He was sent by the Lord God to bear witness to the Light, so that all those who heard his preaching might believe on the Light. This man—St. John the Baptist—was the last prophet sent from the Lord God to prepare the way for the Lord God to come into His creation as a man. St. John the Baptist was sent to point the way to the Messiah—the Christ, the Anointed One of the Lord God. He was sent to point us to our Savior—the One Who would take us out of the darkness and bring us back into the light. He would remove from us the sting and pain of sin and death, and give to us forgiveness and life.

St. John the Baptist points us to the Christ and says, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.” That perfect and spotless Lamb—the Lamb of God—was our Lord + Jesus. He came into this world to be with His own creation. He came down from Heaven, and took upon Himself our flesh, so that He might fulfill the whole Law and will of the Lord God, and suffer our death on the tree of the holy cross, so that we would finally be rescued from the darkness of sin, and be given an eternal life with our Lord and Creator. Our Lord + Jesus became incarnate for us. He took upon our flesh—the flesh of His very own creation—so that He might dwell with us, His creation. He came in our flesh to remove us from the darkness of sin and restore to us the Light of salvation in Him.

He came in our flesh, so that He might place us once again into a perfect garden of pleasure. This garden of pleasure is now an eternal garden of pleasure. This garden is found in the eternal realms of Heaven, where we, and all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus come in our flesh, will live for all eternity in mansions prepared for us. Just like at the creation of the world, our Lord God Who loves us so much and gave us a perfect world to live in—that we rejected—He comes to us again to restore us back into a perfect world filled with light. Our Lord God came to us Himself in order to restore His creation to the place in which He intended for us.

But like the beginning of the world—just like with Adam and Eve—the world did not receive the Christ—their Savior. The world loves the darkness more than they love the light. In our sinfulness we also show that we love the darkness more than the light. We love to do whatever we want to do, not considering the consequences of our actions. Our Lord God would give to us the greatest of gifts—a perfect world made just for us—and we hate the gift. Our Lord God would come to us in our very own

flesh—the flesh in which He wrapped us at our creation—but without sin, but we rejected Him. He came in our flesh to give us the best gift we could ever receive—a world filled with life and light—and this world chose to remain in death and darkness.

The Blessed Lord + Jesus came into our world to win for us life and salvation, and rejected Him and nailed Him to a tree. This death of our Lord + Jesus—this death of our Lord God—was for the benefit of the whole world. For by His innocent suffering and death He redeemed us back from that deceiving serpent the devil; He redeemed us back from our sin of eating from the tree which we were forbidden; He redeemed us back from death, and restored us to life, so that we might live was again in the eternal realm filled with Light—the garden of pleasure called, “Heaven.”

The Prophets the Lord God sent to the people of Israel were prepared for the coming of the Messiah by their preaching of these promises. The prophets preached that the Messiah would come and give us these great gifts—the only gifts we truly need, or should desire. St. John the Baptist was the last of these prophets, and he came to be a witness of the Messiah—our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. The preaching of the prophets taught all those who heard and received with gladness the promise of the Messiah. All those who heard the promises were filled with faith by the gifting of the Holy Ghost, so that they might cling to the works and merits of the Christ, and rejoice that the Lord God has come to them in their own flesh. All those who believe on the Lord + Jesus are now filled with His light—they are filled with the light of salvation. They no longer dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

We this night, in this darkness of the world, bring the light of the Christ into this world. For the Word dwells among us, and where the Word of the Lord God is, there is light. The first Word our Lord God spoke, was “Let there be light!” My dear friends, let there be light among us. Let the light of our Savior + Jesus Christ fill this sanctuary, as we rejoice that He has gifted us with the greatest gift we can ever receive. He has given to us out of His great love for us, forgiveness of our sins, eternal life and salvation in Him alone.

The candles which we hold and which we light symbolize this light of the Christ in our midst. The darkness in which we sit represents the darkness that plagues this world. Let our lights so shine in this dark world, so that our light might be a testimony to the One True Light of the World, our Lord + Jesus. For our Lord and Creator has come to us this night to take us out of the darkness of this world, and bring us into His marvelous light. The Word of God, which was in the beginning, and was with the Lord God, and was the Lord God, has now taken upon our flesh, and dwells among us. We behold His glory—the glory of the salvation that is found in Him alone—and we rejoice this night for this great gift that He gives to us. Therefore, my dear friends, as we have borne witness to the mysteries of this Light on this night, may we through faith in the Light of the Christ obtain the eternal joys of the garden of pleasure in Heaven, so that we may have a very merry Christmas. Merry Christmas to you all! 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!*