

The Vigil of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord
St. John 1:1-14
December 24th, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

In Him Was Life

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.”

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.

Dearly beloved, this night is the holiest of all nights. It is the night we celebrate Christ's entrance into the earth wearing our flesh; the night we celebrate Christ becoming man. Christ, the One to Whom angels sing and shepherds bow before now rests in the arms of the gentle and gracious woman St. Mary. But to fully understand this event: that the Lord of lords now lies in a cattle trough, we must first begin with dirt.

What is dirt? It is dry, lifeless, earth. All by itself the ground seems dead, unable to grow anything. If you do not believe me, put some dirt in a pot and watch what happens. Nothing! When it is isolated and alone, empty and thirsty, the earth is desolate ground and hard soil. If you have ever seen a field or your yard after a drought, you know what I am talking about. Even the ground is cursed by Adam's ancient transgression. The dry, lifeless earth waits for the rain to come down and water it and give it life, so that the seeds that were planted may spring forth and produce fruit. The earth finds its life in receiving life-giving water from above, so that it may be filled, give fruit.

This is why the ancients called the earth “mother,” because in the earth they saw a picture of fertility and birth. We are formed from this earth. This same dry, lifeless earth which Adam made cursed by his sin. We are by nature dirt. We carry a futile draught within us. Our souls are dry, dusty, dirty, thirsty, longing for the waters of life to reign down from heaven and give us life. Isolated and lonely, we sing out the Advent hymns of longing and hope. “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus, come and set Your people free.” “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.” By these words, we confess that we are dirt, that we are lifeless, and are in need of the water of life to come down and bear fruit within us.

And so, my dearly beloved, of the Father's love, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, was begotten. He became man for us. Christ placed Himself in the very dirty, and lifeless flesh of His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. And He took on that flesh to bring forth life. He Who created all things, without Whom nothing was made that was made, and Who was from the beginning, both with the Lord God, and is

the Lord God, came to be the Light of all men, for in Him was life. His life was the light of all men. This light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did apprehend it not. But as many as have received Him, to them He gave the right to be called children of God. This is the gift to all those who believe on His Name. For this Lord + Jesus, the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us. He entered into our flesh to redeem us from sin and death.

Just as the seed goes into the ground and comes forth as fruit, so too, does our Lord + Jesus plant Himself into the womb of His mother Mary, in order that He might give us the fruit of eternal life. For in Him was and is life. This is what we celebrate tonight, my dear friends, the heavens have rained down eternal life, and our Lord + Jesus bestows it upon us, her children. Just as mother earth bears the fruit of the land. And just as the Blessed Virgin Mary bears forth the Life of the world, so too, does Holy, Mother Church bear her children. For the Church washes away the “dirtiness” of our lives. In our Holy Baptism, in the waters of Holy Baptism, we see where we as infants of the faith put on new flesh, and bear a new life. And even as St. Mary heard the words “thou that art highly favored,” so too, in our Holy Baptisms do we hear the words, “thou art highly favored.” We are no longer, dry, lifeless dirt, but we are now a fruit bearing plant, bearing fruit, some sixty, some eighty, and some one hundred times what was planted.

The same flesh which Christ put on in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the flesh which knows no sin, but is holy and righteous. We have put on by faith in the womb of the Church, in the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism. And this same flesh of Christ, which He took upon Himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we will eat tonight. We will receive from on high the gracious and life-giving Words of Lord God recorded by the Apostle and Evangelist St. John that “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And as the heavenly Father gave forth His Only-Begotten Son to dwell in our flesh, and the Blessed Virgin Mary cradled Him in her bosom, this night we will cradle in our mouths the flesh of the Christ. We will eat His Body and drink His blood in the lowly means of bread and wine.

Here at this altar tonight our parched bodies, crying out for forgiveness and life, will be given the heavenly dew of salvation; here our empty hands and empty hearts weighed down with sin and shame, will be filled with the flesh and blood of our Lord God, Who has rained down from heaven in order that He might live and be with His people. He Who created the heavens and the earth, comes down to be man, so that He might dwell with man. He comes to pour down righteousness upon us, and all mankind. All those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. He comes as a light in this dark world, to light the pathway into heaven. He is the light which brings us into heaven.

This, my dearly beloved, is what makes this night the holiest of all nights, not that there can be anything holy about a night, contrary to certain popular songs, but this night is holy because of Who comes to dwell with His people. He Who comes to redeem us poor, miserable sinners. Christ now dwells with His people in the lowliest and humblest of forms. In order that He might make us, who are dirty and lifeless on account of our manifold sins and trespasses—on account of our transgressions and iniquities—alive and forgiven of our sins. “There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His Name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.” On account of this, may we all have a very merry Christmas, living in the knowledge that we have been redeemed by Him from sin and death. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word

would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!