

John 1:1-14

People don't want to hear St. John's Christmas story on Christmas Eve. They want to hear the Christmas story as St. Luke tells it. They want to hear about Mary and Joseph, the angels, and the shepherds. Even St. Matthew has Mary and Joseph and an angel in his story, along with magi and gifts. But John includes none of these things. His Christmas story is just five words long: "*And the Word became flesh.*" We could memorize John's Christmas story without any trouble at all. And we should; as Christians, we must. Our life depends on it.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux put forth the idea that when the powerful archangel Lucifer (Satan) learned that God was to become man, and not an angel, he and his angels were shocked in great anger, even as God's angels rejoiced at this news. For had the Word of God become an angel, then Satan and his angels would have had a Savior. But as it is, because the Word became flesh, you and I, along with all mankind, have a Savior from sin, death, and hell.

But you also have a powerful enemy who is angry at you because you have a Savior and he does not, nor will he ever. Your weapon against Satan is St. John's Christmas story. Satan stands unmoved when God's Word is spoken; but when he hears a child of God speaking John's Christmas story in faith: "*And the Word became flesh,*" Satan vanishes. These words mixed with faith drive him away.

He thought he had the last laugh in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3 we're told how he seduced Eve, and she with her husband, Adam, fell into sin. And so now everyone born into this world is born a slave to sin with Satan as our cruel master. But God came to give the last word. A Savior would come; not for the angels who sinned; for man, for us.

Christmas is the sequel to Genesis 3. Our flesh and blood is not doomed to spend eternity in hell under Satan's rule. "*The Word became flesh.*" God does not reject you because of your disobedience. He joins Himself to you. He covers Himself with flesh, your flesh, to deliver you and bring you into heaven.

Christmas is actually the season of pre-Lent. Lent is months away. But there are reminders for us in the Christmas story that He who became flesh did so to die on a cross. Simeon tells Mary that a sword would pierce her soul. Herod slaughters children as he looks for the Child born of Mary. The spears of Herod's soldiers, and the nails driven into the tiny coffins in Bethlehem, would follow Jesus all the way to Calvary's cross.

But this is how it had to be. Heaven could never be opened to sinners like us unless God Himself came down from heaven. He became flesh so that your flesh, and mine, is now welcome in heaven. His flesh was ripped open on the cross, and His blood there was shed, and this is your salvation. No angel can say this, but you can: God forgives me because the Word became flesh, and since I am of flesh, I have a Savior from sin.

The wood of the manger points us to the wood of the cross. There is your Savior. His love for you put Him there. And His love puts Him on the altar for you. As He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, so He is wrapped in the bread and wine of the Sacrament. If you are a sinner, then here

is forgiveness for you. The Word of God chose, in great humility, to be born of Mary's womb, and so He also promises to be born in us through humble bread and wine.

As you come forward in faith, you are driving Satan away, because here you are saying "Amen!" to John's Christmas story: "*The Word became flesh.*" You are declaring that in this Sacrament He is here with His flesh and blood for you. No evil angel, not even Satan, can have power over you when you have the Word made flesh for you, and in you.

And so on this Christmas Day, come with joy to the altar of your Lord - the true manger. Come with John's Christmas story on your lips and in your heart: "*And the Word became flesh,*" "Amen!"