

The Nativity of Our Lord  
St. John 1:1-18

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1-2) While God was always present with His people, as you might recall from a sermon three weeks ago, He didn't always speak directly to them, certainly not as a group so that everyone could hear. That said, God is always present in His Word, and long ago His Word was most often proclaimed by the prophets. That's the way God spoke to His people long ago, revealing His Word to the prophets who would reveal God to the people through that same Word.

But now, in these latter days, God's presence among men is through His Son. There are still prophets, so to speak, as I mentioned in a Sunday sermon several days ago, who relate to men the Word of God. However, unlike the prophets of long ago, the prophets today speak the Word already revealed in the Scripture, nothing that was told them in a vision or dream, because that's how God interacted long ago. So, to you it is given to hear the Word of God as it has been handed down from the Apostles and Prophets, recounted for you again and again, because you need to hear it again and again, hear the message of the Gospel again and again, that the Son of God was incarnate of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, buried, and rose again, all for your forgiveness, life, and salvation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The beginning—long ago—the Word existed as was given to man by the prophets. Now, the Word still exists and is given to man in flesh and blood.

First, the flesh and blood of the Word of God is the same flesh and blood as yours. Assumed in the womb of the virgin Mary, the Word became flesh and dwelt among man. God gave Himself as His own creation to mankind in order to walk with them, talk to them and teach them, eat with them, using His own voice—when Jesus spoke, that was the very voice of God heard by the people. But Jesus also healed them and forgave them. And He charged His church to continue giving Him to His people in Word and Sacrament.

So, the people continue to hear and receive the Word of God as He is proclaimed to them. If you hear these new prophets, the modern-day preachers, speaking the Word of God in its truth and purity, then you, too, are hearing the voice of God; it just sounds like the voice of that preacher. Dreams and visions, such as the prophets and a few others have had, don't happen with any regularity or as a matter of new revelation—so, if they happen, they cannot be discounted out of hand, but must always be measured against the Scripture. And while Abraham may have dined with God, and spoke to Him over that board, that certainly doesn't happen at all for anyone else, as far as I've been made aware, at least not like that.

You see, the Word of God is still become flesh for you. In the simple means of bread and wine, the Word of God comes to you in flesh and blood, giving Himself for you for your forgiveness, life, and salvation. Up there on the altar, the Word of God makes these means what they are for you, because

He still dwells among you in order to walk with you, talk to you and teach you, and, yes, even eat with you. He gives Himself to you to make you His own. That is His glory, which He reveals to you.

It was revealed on the cross, a most inglorious death, but by His death on the cross, He shed His blood and gave His body over to death in order that you would be forgiven for all of your sins, won back from death to life, and saved from this body of sin. In that, the Father and Son glory, for it is their victory over sin, death, and the devil—their enemies, and yours.

So, that you may continue in this, the Word of God, He continues to come to you in Word and Sacrament. There is no need to look for visions, burning bushes, wrestling matches, dinners, or any other way to hear the voice of God. He doesn't promise to come to you in any of those ways. But He does promise to come to you in His Word proclaimed to you—flesh and blood comes to you in order to teach and heal and forgive and renew and restore. He does promise to come to you in Sacrament, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper—flesh and blood comes to you in order to teach and heal and forgive and renew and restore.

He gives to you all that you need for your forgiveness, life, and salvation. The Word became flesh and dwells among you. God lived and died for you. God rose again and ascended for you. God continues to give Himself to you and be with you, flesh-and-blood, so that when He returns, He will take you to be where He is for eternity. The Word became flesh, and you have seen His glory, full of grace and truth, and the truth is that you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.