

Idols and Lies, Word and Flesh

John 1:1–18

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Word incarnated who has dwelt among us.

“A Great and Mighty Wonder,” indeed. That the Word would become flesh, and a great and mighty wonder indeed in his achievements. And just his being with us in the flesh, our last hymn says what has happened. “All idols then shall perish and Satan’s lying cease, and Christ shall raise his scepter, decreeing endless peace” (LSB 383:5).

At Christmas, the Word became flesh to replace idols and Satan’s lies with endless Peace.

It is the idols, the false gods, and the lies of Satan that Jesus has come to destroy, to bring them to naught, to drive them away from you by his Word. He is the Word, the Word made flesh. “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (vv 10–13). This world is in darkness, but into it Christ comes. The world he made, the world he loves.

Now we are talking about idles and lies. What is that mean? The fact is that the Word, God, Jesus had made all things in perfection and holiness right there at the beginning, with Adam and Eve at the Garden of Eden. But then Satan came, and he came with his lies, first with doubt: Did God really say... that if you disobey him you will die? Here comes the lie, “No you wouldn’t, instead “You will be like God.”

Right at that moment Man fell for it, and not only fell for it, but begun to idolize that the lie. Right then and there, man fell into idolatry. The man realized his error, but still to this day he rather would follow idolatry. But back then a curse followed: “In the day you eat of it, you will surely die.” Death has been with us ever since. But God would allow death to win the day, so he made a promise, the woman’s seed will come and will save them. And the Seed indeed came. He came to restore mankind and to undo the curse, to undo death and tear down the idols of man.

Idles of man? After the lie at the Garden, Satan continues increase that lie by introducing new idles to man, idles that at the inciting of satan, man produced. Psalm 115:4–8 explains what those idles are: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.” Now, these words only refer to statues and figurines, right? Sure, but then again silver and gold can be molded into all kind of things, from statues and figurines to coins and currency. And once they become idles, then know that death follows. It is not what you have in your packets or bank account,

it is not the political leader we follow, or the trends in society that will save us from that certain death.

Yet, is the situation of the world today, isn't it. It is a situation of darkness. Even to this day, Satan has been the father of lies and sad to say but will continue that way until Christ comes again, he keeps begetting new idolatrous children even at Christmas: "Things you buy, things you receive, will make you happy." "Here you are, all alone. The world celebrates; you're forgotten, so buy more, have more." But, Pastor, this type of message we have heard before. This time of message, are kind of depressing, and that could be, I must admit, but we also need to admit that some of Satan's best lies tempt us to trust those idols, and he will not rest until we are doomed. His lies are and will be present as ever, and we need to be reminded of them constantly, lest we perish. People, money, all those things—these are the idols or false gods that are all around us. You hear of them, you can see them, we can't avoid them. You are constantly tempted to put your trust in created things you can see, to love them more than God, to find contentment in them. Just like the idols of the ancient nations, today's idols are inanimate; there is no life in them. They are made by men and cannot save. They might look good, but they cannot see, they cannot hear, they cannot smell or feel or walk, and, especially, they cannot speak—not truth, anyway. Although you can argue that "money talks." And sure, it does, if someone has a lot of money, they also have a lot of power, and get away with everything, that's the world we live in today, and it's becoming a terrible idolatry. In fact, it has become a terrible idolatry. But don't be mistaken. The end of it is death indeed. Although it appears to be light, really is darkness and a terrible one.

Yet in the midst of that terrible darkness, your God, your incarnate God, the Word made flesh, can speak, and he does, he can shine his light, and he does. He was born with mouth, eyes, nose, hands, feet. From the mouth of the Virgin's Son comes all truth. He sees your great need right now. He sees that if you continue to be in the path of idolatry, you will be destroyed, therefore he offers you salvation even right now. He hears your prayers of repentance, begging for mercy, for he smells the stink of sin and death that covers the world. The Word was made flesh with hands and feet to feel the sting of the nails with which he was tortured in our place. Having touched and healed and fed and walked amongst a people in darkness, he did die. He died the death we were deserving.

And that was what was needed—for him to die for you, in your place, for your sins. What was needed was his resurrection to destroy death for you. He did what was needed. The Word was made flesh. He joined himself to your humanity to keep the Law. He died a perfect death. His death was the perfect atoning sacrifice in your place, for you and for all the world. And he was raised again for your justification. The Word was made flesh for this, for this work.

At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus speaks: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn 20:29). You live by faith in the Gospel, that the Christ Child is full of grace and truth, and you love those things not seen. The reality of his

incarnation and birth, his precious death and burial, his glorious resurrection and ascension, his presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, his very body and blood born of the Virgin—these things are not seen, but we adore him for them all, for these gifts bring life to you, eternal life. You are to love things that aren't seen; that is what a faith strengthened again at Christmas does. Faith loves things not seen.

And so we pray during this holy Christmas that God would give us a love for those things not seen. And we do, believing that grace upon grace is revealed in the giving of the Child in the manger. The Child shows that your Father in heaven would have you be his child, born of his own will.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (v 14). That perfect flesh once lay in a manger—and then lay in a tomb. But only for three days. The Word made flesh lives! He lives for you, that you would be raised up in him for life eternal, born anew, born of God. And so you are. Born of God, by water, Spirit, and blood, to live as his children, without fear, not of sin or death or the darkness of this world, but in endless peace.

Amen.