

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Today, the third day of the New Year is the second Sunday of Christmas. In a few days, on January 6, we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord, then, next Sunday January 10, we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord, and our own baptisms. The twelve days of Christmas are almost done, so have you taken down your Christmas decorations yet? It seems many of us are ready to move on into the next phase or whatever the new year brings.

Not too long ago we were talking about Jesus, the Christ child, now I wonder if we've thrown him out with the giftwrapping. Or is he here to stay?

I remember when my son was born, how excited we were. Then reality set in, sleepless nights, a nursing mom, worry when he had a temperature or a cold. A baby needs lots of attention. So as we take the Christ child into our homes, and a new reality sets in. Think now for a moment about our gospel writer's description of Jesus.

John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, who comes to make his home with us. Now when we think of words we think of them as means of communication, and God's Word to us communicates, not only with words, but through flesh and blood. God's Word didn't just take on the appearance of a human, looking like one of us but quite above us, unable to sin, unable to suffer. Instead the Word became human, like one of us, subject to thirst, hunger, temptation, anger, despair, friendship and love. Flesh that despaired in Gethsemane, that was angry in the temple, occasionally impatient, loving always.

That enfleshed Word is present with us now. He was part of the creation process oh so long ago, and through the Word all life was created. The Word became flesh was a special baby who brings us the gift of life. And to all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives power to become children of God, this through the grace of God, grace, mercy, forgiveness.

This child brings grace upon grace. This child is the truth, and through him we are prepared for God's work, equipped with the knowledge of the truth, the truth that sets us free to know God and what God is doing for us, with us, and through us, in Christ's name.

That baby, this child, changed our lives, transformed us into new creatures, gifted us, and blessed us. Fear is cast out, replaced by hope. We may face obstacles in the coming year, but we are not alone, we are not unprepared. Jesus has come into our lives, God manifest on the cross – steadfast love, suffering and dying for us. Full of grace and truth. Jesus is the truth, the only way to the Father. And this my friends, is the true meaning of Christmas, this is reason to celebrate. AMEN