



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School

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A Stephen Ministry Congregation

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Christmas Day

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“Our God Speaks”

(Hebrews 1:1)

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“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” (Hebrews 1:1).

**Every day, everywhere, by everyone...
sharing the grace of the Good Shepherd.**

Collect: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Our God speaks! Already in the third verse of Scripture, God speaks. “Let there be light”, he said, “and there was light.” Right off the bat, we learn that when God speaks, things happen. Light is created. When God says, “Quiet! Be still!” stormy waters turn calm and demons put a cork in it. When God says, “Get up, take your mat, and go home” a man with thin, useless legs gets up and walks home with a spring in his steps. When our God says, “This is my blood, shed for you, then average, ordinary wine suddenly carries the freight of the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from sin.

Our God speaks. Our God speaks through people too. Deuteronomy 18, “I will raise up for them a prophet . . . I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.” And so we have a succession of prophets with the Lord’s Word in their mouths. For example, the Lord said to Ezekiel, “‘Son of man. . . Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel’” (Ezek. 3:1). “When your words came” Jeremiah wrote, “I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight” (15:16).

Our God continues to speak using people. In Mark 16, Jesus said to his disciples, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (v. 15). Romans 10, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (v. 14ff).

Our God speaks through people. Our God speaks through His Son, Jesus. So our text says, “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” (Hebrews 1:1).

Picture now God’s Son, Jesus, lying in the manger of Bethlehem. He is the Word incarnate, the enfleshment of God’s word. But he cannot yet say a word. He cannot manipulate the muscles of his mouth to say even the easiest of words, the first words, such as, “Ama” Aramaic for mom, or , “Abba”, for dad. Still, his very presence silently proclaims what we need to know.

First, that God’s Son is here with us on earth’s soil must mean we are important to him. Sometimes we don’t always think like that. Sometimes we think this is just one little planet orbiting around a star, which is one of 200 billion other stars in the Milky Way, and the creator is far, far away, and doesn’t really care about this little planet. But look, the one who created the sun and the moon and the stars also lies in the manger. It must be important to him.

You know you’re just one of 7 billion people on this planet, so you might be tempted to conclude your life is trivial and unimportant. Not to him it isn’t, because he’s in the manger for you! You may think the life of the guy sitting behind you is trivial and unimportant, or the life of the homeless fellow in Calcutta is insignificant. Not to God it isn’t. He’s born in Bethlehem for you, for all, indeed, for the whole creation!

Second, he’s going through a lot of trouble to be born in Bethlehem. He’s changed his very nature, taking on human flesh, never to be rid of it again. It must be something important that compelled such drastic measures. He didn’t leave the splendor of heaven and come down to earth where dull hell fires burn just for the fun of it. No, it probably means we’re in some kind of trouble, big trouble, trouble from which we cannot save ourselves.

Of course, because God speaks we know what the trouble is: sin and its wages. Sending more prophets won’t help; even another 10,000 prophets like Moses could not preach us out of our penchant to sin. Not even the angels can fix what ails us, or God would have sent them. We

know from Scripture we are slaves to sin and cannot free ourselves from that slavery. We know we owe a debt we cannot pay. It'd be like trying to pay off the nation's debt with whatever happens to be in your checking account. It wouldn't even make a dent!

So first, and without saying a word, the fact that Jesus is born proclaims we are important to him, and second, we are in a kind of trouble from which no one can rescue us, no one but him. Third, he comes to us as an infant, which means he's humble by nature, and approachable. No one feels physically threatened by an infant. Apparently, God doesn't want to be the kind of god from which people flee. Just the opposite: infants have this tremendous gravitational pull on us. I never met more people than when I was carrying around an infant.

Jesus never grew out of this humility and approachability. In Matthew 11 he says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." He's not aiming to drive people away. He's aiming to pull them in close. Therefore, he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). In Isaiah, God said, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. Also, you that have not money, come, buy, and eat. Come! Buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Is. 55:1). Or to his disciples, "Come away with me to a quiet place and rest a while" (Mk. 6:31), or of the children, "Let them come to me and do not hinder them." That is, don't throw up any obstacles soccer or sleeping in. Don't neglect your duty as parents. Find a way to bring them to Jesus.

Can't you see how God is not trying to keep us at arm's length. To the contrary, it's usually us sinners who try to keep God at arm's length, like Adam and Eve hiding from God, or Jonah fleeing from God, or Peter, from within the boat saying, "Stay away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man", or those who were invited to the king's banquet being just too darn busy to attend. But God still wants to pull us

in, so Jesus introduces himself to us as an infant, and there's nothing quite like an infant to pull people in.

We know that new born infants can see only about 8 to 15 inches away, just far enough to make out the face of the person holding them or nursing them. As adults then, and instinctively, we get right into the faces of babies, don't we? We invade their personal space. That guy sitting behind you . . . you would never go up to him and get in his face and smile and coo and tweak his nose with your own. But we do that to infants all the time. It's expected. Any God who comes to us as an infant definitely wants us to approach and draw close, and Jesus has never grown out of that humility and approachability and welcome.

In any event, our God speaks. Even while he sleeps quietly in the manger, he proclaims the message loud and clear: We are important to him. He's here to rescue us. He wants us to stay close, sort of like a shepherd with his sheep.

Also, in the quietness of his death on the cross, our God speaks. On the cross, even though he's no longer able to manipulate his mouth around any words, even the most simplest of words, like "Ama" or "Abba," yet his lifeless body proclaims a love that will go to the extremes to save us, a love that will stretch his promises to the break point to include us, a love that is not ashamed to be our God. In his life, he kept the law which we could not keep, and with his death, paid the debt which we could never have paid.

Our God speaks. Our God speaks at creation, and through the prophets. Our God speaks from within the manger, even as he sleeps. Our God speaks from the cross, even in the stillness of death.

"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." Thanks be to God! Amen.

