

John 1:12-14 Christmas is a time of miracles! Christmas Day December 25, 2016

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

Grace and peace have come to us in the form of a baby named Jesus sent from God our loving Father. Amen
God's Word of miracles is written in John 1:12-14

These are Your Words heavenly Father that lead us to believe and rejoice. Your Word is truth! Amen!

Dear Christian Friends,

Each year there are many Christmas movies on TV. Most are very touching, with families reunited or someone in serious trouble getting help in an almost miraculous way. There are movies where angels appear and help people. Other shows offer fictional figures that fulfill children's requests. From these movies we can say that the season of Christmas is portrayed as a time of miracles. But, these miracles can't compare to God's Word that tells us of the great miracle that happened when God's Son came into this world. Our verses make it clear that

Christmas is a time of miracles!

The first miracle is that God became one of us. Throughout the Old Testament, God appeared in various forms: as a man, walking with Adam and Eve in the garden; as fire in a bush, as a bright cloud in the wilderness or as a still small voice for Elijah. There were times in the Old Testament when the Son of God appeared as The Angel of the Lord to give messages to Abraham, Gideon, or other believers. But, the forms God used back then were temporary. And one time when Moses was discouraged, he wanted to see God fully to be encouraged. But, God told Moses that he would die if he saw Him in all His glory. It wasn't just Moses. Due to sin, all people cannot fully look at the holy majesty of God and live. But, by a miracle, God came to live among people in a way that would save them rather than destroy them.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (v. 14) This is a miracle not of God's power but of His grace! Since we couldn't go to God due to our sinfulness, He came to us in the flesh. Paul wrote, *"[Jesus Christ], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."* (Philippians 2:6-7) How such a miracle could happen, we cannot comprehend. But Matthew wrote, *"The virgin will be with child, and give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:23)*

What a mystery this miracle was! How could the unchangeable Son of God take on a new human nature? Since Jesus was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, God now had a perfect human Son. In the Christmas manger we see a child who was born in time, yet He had existed in eternity; we see a child weak and dependent on His mother, yet He was the Creator of the world and sustains it with the Father. We see a humble and lowly child. Yet at the same time He was the King of all kings. What a miracle it was!

John wrote that believers had seen Jesus' glory. People didn't see it at Bethlehem when Mary gave birth to Jesus and laid Him in a manger. Later when the wisemen found Him, He didn't look like a king at his lowly house in Bethlehem. Jesus had no glory while hanging on the cross or when He was wrapped in cloths and laid in a grave. But there were certain times of glory! John with Peter and James saw Jesus transfigured. His face was brighter than the sun. Yet His glory wasn't just in appearance. He showed glory in His depth of compassion. His love was so great; He was willing to die for all people. The disciples saw His glory when Jesus was raised from the dead. Who could have imagined, when first seeing baby Jesus in a manger, the great things He would accomplish to bring eternal blessings!

Thankfully, Jesus came as a humble human with His heavenly glory hidden so He could be a gracious Savior! He came *“full of grace and truth.”* He won for people the fullness of God’s undeserved love. He brought truth that He was the Way to eternal life with His loving Father! We could add nothing to His accomplished work, which began the day that the humble Christ was born and laid in a manger.

The second Christmas miracle is that people believe in Jesus! By nature, people don’t want to trust God’s promises. Earlier John described Jesus as the Light shining into the darkness of unbelief. Normally light chases darkness away, but the darkness of sin is so powerful it remains in darkness. It would be like rescuers going into a dark cave with lights to look for lost hikers. As they approach with lights, those lost run further into the darkness and remain lost. People can do the same thing because Jesus’ light first exposes their sins which they want to hide. As long as they do not repent, Jesus’ forgiveness will do them no good! John wrote, *“The world did not recognize him. He came to His own, but His own did not receive him.”* (v.10-11) The humble Christ is not what the Jews expected nor do they find value in Jesus today if He does not bring about world peace or safety. He didn’t look like a Savior when He was laid in a manger or later when He was laid in a tomb. Yet, the Word makes it clear that Jesus won our salvation despite human objections. That is why we must say that it is a miracle of God that anyone has faith in Jesus to save them.

John wrote, *“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”* (v.12-13) How incredible is that! I can’t think of a time in history where a world leader was willing to give His own son to that the children of an enemy could become part of his family! But, while we were enemies, God sent His Son so we could become God’s children. All who believe in Jesus can be certain that God is their heavenly Father and that they are just as dear to Him as His own perfect Son who was laid in a manger! This is the status or right that Jesus won that we receive by faith in Him!

In earlier readings in Advent we heard how God’s Word changed people’s lives by faith. In Luke, the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and told her that she would give birth to a son. When she wondered how this could happen since she was not married, the angel said that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and create this child in her who would be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35) Also Matthew reports that Joseph was changed by faith. Many men would have looked at the situation: Mary was pregnant. He had nothing to do with it. He thought that there must be another man. But, an angel spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him that the baby inside Mary had *been conceived by the Holy Spirit.* (Matthew 1:20) This truth convinced Joseph. He didn’t hesitate to respond. *“When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.... She gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”* (Matthew 1:24-25) Miracles happened in the past! The fact that we now believe in Jesus as our Savior, is just as great a miracle today. We were dead in our sins, but made alive in Christ. We were blind in unbelief, but now we see clearly by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Miracles do happen and not just in movies! Through faith we can be just as certain about Jesus as the Apostle John who witnessed Jesus’ miracles, transfiguration, suffering, death, and resurrection. We don’t need to doubt the greatness of our God to save us. Nothing is impossible for Him! (Luke 1:37) Even though Jesus seemed so vulnerable as a baby and in humble circumstances throughout His life, God kept His promise and sent His Son into this world to be the Savior. For us who believe in Him, Christmas will always be a time to celebrate true miracles. Amen.