

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 20, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 126, 132:1-2, 138, 361, 359.

Lessons: Isaiah 60:15-22, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 3:14-21.

Sermon Text: John 1:9-14.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Perhaps you have often heard the words from Galatians: *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Galatians 3:26-27)

In our sermon text today we point to the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to make men sons of God, children of God. In order to do this, he had to bring mankind into the light of God.

We would agree that light gives us opportunity to see in order to do what needs to be done. Without light we really can't do much of anything at all. Even in the physical world light scares away crime, evil, and wickedness. But this light of God is an even greater light, a more important kind of light. Later in this gospel, Jesus tells us *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12) Today let's be reminded that

**JESUS IS THE LIGHT THAT CAME INTO THE WORLD**

- 1. The relationship of Jesus to the world.**
- 2. He came to his own, who rejected him.**
- 3. Jesus gives the power to become children of God.**

*"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."* In the first verses of this gospel we saw Jesus before creation and involved in creation. Through him light was created. Now we see why we also can know him, because he came into the world to shine his light on us. He *"gives light to every man."* He does not restrict his light. Only those who refuse it in unbelief must go without it. That light *"was coming into the world"* so that all might know him.

When John the Baptist was bearing witness of Jesus, Jesus was already in the world. He had become a part of the physical world as true man. He was subject to the usual laws governing man and his relation to the universe. And all this was true, though He had been the Creator of the whole world. Scripture is clear about that: *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."* (Colossians 1:16)

But in spite of the fact that He was in the world and had created the world, the people of the world did not know Him, and did not acknowledge Him. So thoroughly is the world estranged from God that people did not recognize their own Creator. What the evangelist said earlier about the darkness not understanding the light was true even of God's chosen people, Israel, who did not know and receive Jesus, the Word, in their midst. The people of the promise rejected the fulfillment of the promise.

The entire world consists of people in need of redemption, and yet the majority insists upon being counted with those who are lost eternally. The majority of the people of the world will not acknowledge and accept Him. Why? You heard in our epistle lesson: *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

**"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."** Jesus came unto His own, to the vineyard which His Father had planted, to the chosen people of the Old Testament, the descendants of Abraham, the ones called the Jews. But those who belonged to Him, who had received so many evidences of His grace and goodness, did not receive Him. They did not welcome this Messiah, this Savior for whom they were supposedly waiting. The great majority of them rejected Him and His salvation. The leaders of the children of Israel and the great multitude of the Jews did not acknowledge Him as the Messiah. He did not come as they had imagined he should come. At Christmas we saw how simply he came.

Even though John pointed to him and said, **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** (John 1:29) they did not, by and large, accept him. Even when Jesus himself began preaching and performing miracles, they did not recognize him as the Messiah.

But not everyone rejected him. Some, including some not from his own people, received the Word. Our text says **"Yet 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."** There were even a few Israelites who received Him as the promised Messiah. They are ones who believed on His name and put their full trust for their eternal salvation in Him.

To receive Christ, to believe on Him, and to trust in His name, are expressions that identify the same process; they are synonymous.

To those who believed in him, Jesus gives the great privilege or right to become the sons of God by adoption. Paul writes **"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."** (Galatians 4:4-7)

This describes the life we find in the Word, life as God's own beloved children. The light everyone needs is the light that God causes to shine in the world. He works faith in the hearts of those who then become his children. They enter into the right relationship to him. They accept him as their Father. They are those of whom Scripture says **"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."** (Galatians 3:26)

Despite whatever kind of family life one might have here on earth, in Jesus Christ's family, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, one can have – by faith – and be part of the absolutely ideal family. In that family, which we call the invisible church, everyone is a child of God. We call it invisible because faith in Jesus Christ as Savior makes one a member of that family. And no one can see faith, only the fruits of faith, good works. The heavenly Father in this family fills the roles of both earthly parents: He loves, he provides, he nurtures, he comforts, he protects. He is always there when we need him. We need only look in his Holy Word to see what he has to say to us. He teaches and guides by his Holy Scriptures. And he provides an everlasting inheritance in heaven. All this and more belongs to the person who receives Jesus Christ.

In the explanation of the third article of the creed, we confess "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true."

Just as we did not choose our earthly parents, so we do not in any way choose God as our Father. He chose us. When we believe in Jesus, our spiritual birth, a rebirth, is complete. But we must continue to grow in that faith. It isn't finished until we are with him in heaven.

Scripture then speaks of **"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."**

In this way, the process of becoming children of God is contrasted with the process of physical birth. The children of God are produced in a wonderful way, unlike that of natural conception and birth. In nature children are conceived and born of human flesh and by an act of the will of man. But this physical birth does not make a person a child of God. The children of God are born out of God. He is their true Father. To Him alone and to no human, to no earthly power or will do they owe this spiritual life and being, this spiritual birth

and existence. Regeneration is the work of God, and it is his work all alone. This regeneration or rebirth is one of those marvelous pictures of Scripture which show how one is made a child of God, a believer. Conversion, also called regeneration or rebirth and quickening – being made alive when we were dead in trespasses and sins – is the work of God the Holy Ghost.

By their receiving this testimony concerning Christ into their heart, a marvelous change has been worked in believers. God has in this way made them partakers of the divine nature. Faith, which receives the Word and Christ, is worked by God through the Word. Thus believers – sons of God – have the nature of their heavenly Father. A new spiritual, divine life is found in them.

And though they are not born out of the essence of the Father, like the only-begotten Son, yet because God adopts them they have all the rights of children. They are heirs with Christ of the bliss of eternal salvation. Scripture uses this picture: ***"Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."*** (Romans 8:17)

Just how this was brought about, that God could gather children out of the midst of a world that did not accept His Son, is shown in that incomparably beautiful passage about the incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ. ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** The Word, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, became flesh, assumed true human nature. And instead of appearing just once or twice, He lived among us, he made his dwelling among us, he partook of all the joys and sorrows of a true human existence. There can be no doubt as to the reality of his humanity. While he is and remains the eternal Word of God and Son of God, he is true man, and while on earth he was subject to time and space, in every way like unto us in all the natural needs of the flesh, only without sin. And while he did not make an open, triumphant show of the divine nature which was his even in the state of humiliation, yet, the evangelist writes, we saw His glory. ***"We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** The disciples had opportunity to realize, by close observation on many occasions, that he was truly the Son of God. He still possessed the glory, the supernatural power of the only-begotten Son of the Father. However, in his state of humiliation he did not make full use of his divine power. We can see glimpses of that glory in the miracles Jesus performed while he was on earth.

The Father had begotten Him from eternity. He became flesh at the right time in history, retaining, however, the full control of His divinity, lower than the Father only according to His humanity. His glory and majesty, His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, which mark Him as true God, became evident time and again in His miracles. People on earth at that time, especially his disciples, saw glimpses of His glory. Christ is therefore not only almighty God, but also an almighty man; not only omniscient God, but also omniscient man; not only omnipresent God, but also omnipresent man. And this only-begotten Son, in His work as Savior, is full of grace and truth. Grace and truth are concentrated in Him; they are the sum of His essence. The free and unmerited love and mercy of God is found in the person of Jesus, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. We read in Colossians 2:9-10: ***"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."***

Today we can rejoice that we have been made children of God, through the work of God. Although we have not personally seen Jesus, as did the apostle John and others, we can see him each time we open the Word of God. His light, his love, his grace are all found there. With the Psalmist we can rejoice: ***"Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations."*** Psalm 98:1-2  
Thank you, dear Lord, for calling us to be your children and giving us your light! Amen.