

Divinity and Humanity

John 1:1-14

The Nativity of Our Lord, December 25, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

And so God has become flesh.

This is what we are actually celebrating at Christmas. I realize that we are celebrating the birth of our Lord, but to celebrate a birthday for someone who is risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God is a little odd. It is even odder to celebrate His birthday when you consider that He was alive before He was born. And so while we have selected this date to celebrate His birth what we are really celebrating is the fact that God became flesh. That is to say that God became human. He became like us.

In point of fact God was already flesh even before our Lord was born. As soon as our Lord was conceived in the virgin Mary He was already human then. But it is hard to celebrate the conception of our Lord. The date the Church has selected to celebrate our Lord's conception is March 25. It is called the Annunciation of our Lord. It is hard to celebrate the Annunciation then because Good Friday and Easter usually fall somewhere around that time and even if they don't we are far into Lent. And so the celebration of the fact that God has become human is reserved for December 25, nine months after March 25. We celebrate the day of His birth and by doing so we are celebrating the fact that God has become human.

Our Lord is authentically human and authentically divine at the same time. It is a paradox beyond human comprehension, but since God can do what He likes He can do this. Our Lord is not a mixture of divinity and humanity. If He were then He would be neither human nor divine. He would rather be some third thing that was a blend of divinity and humanity. So when it comes to our Lord the divinity and the humanity of our Lord are distinct. That way He is genuinely human. He is not pretending to be human. He is genuinely divine He is not pretending to be divine.

Our Lord was not pretending when He was tempted. He was really tempted. He was not pretending when He sleeps. He is really tired. He is not pretending when He eats. He is really eating. He was not pretending when He died. He really died. And if His death is not pretend then neither was His birth and neither was His resurrection.

Our Lord is not pretending when He casts out demons. He actually cast the demons out. Our Lord is not pretending when He commands the wind and the sea. He actually commanded the wind and the sea and they obeyed Him. Our Lord is not pretending to raise the dead. He is going around and raising the dead. Our Lord gives

indication of His divinity when He heals the blind man by using mud from the earth to heal him. When our Lord uses mud from the earth to heal the blind man He is using the original substance out of which He created humanity in the beginning to heal this human that is blind.

Our Lord is authentically human. He is authentically divine. He is both in one person. So just as the humanity and the divinity of our Lord are always distinct so also the humanity and divinity of our Lord are never separated from each other. Our Lord does not switch back and forth between His humanity and His divinity. He is not God one moment and human the next. He is God and man all at once all of the time. When He commands the wind and the waves, He is a human being standing in a ship. With a human mouth and with human lungs He issues His commands to the wind and the sea. But because of His divinity the wind and the sea obey Him. They would have ignored you and me.

Now what is the point of this?

Is this just esoteric theology with which Pastor is going to regale us on Christmas Day?

The point of this is that these are things crucial to our salvation that require a Savior exactly like the Savior that Jesus was and is.

First, one human being cannot redeem another. The Word of God teaches this. The most that a human being can do is redeem himself. If a human being is going to redeem himself he must do so by paying the wages of sin. The wages of sin is death. The wages of sin is not just any death. It is eternal death. We call it hell. Therefore if a person is going to pay the wages of his sin and redeem himself, he must spend an eternity in hell to do it. And even if he does do that, the only person that he has redeemed is himself. He has not redeemed anyone else.

Therefore if Jesus were only a human being and not God the only person He could redeem would be Himself. Jesus has the advantage of being sinless and would not need to pay any wages for His sin, but if He were only human He still would not be able to redeem anyone else even if He gave His life for them. He certainly could not redeem them from sin and death.

Therefore God Himself becomes human in order to die for His people and redeem them from sin and death. Being God His death counts for everyone. It counts for everyone who has ever lived or ever does live or ever will live. He redeems everyone from one end of creation to the other.

The shed blood of Jesus is the shed blood of God and the shed blood of God is enough to atone for the sin of the world. It is enough to pay the wages of sin for the

whole world. It does not so much matter how long Jesus suffered damnation while He died on the cross, the point is that it was God who was suffering it for us and since God is eternal His suffering is eternal and it pays for the sins of all.

Second, God is spirit. Because God is spirit He does not of Himself have a body. Without a body God cannot die. God is eternal and unkillable anyway. How would you kill Him? But a death is required in order to pay the wages of humanity's sin. And this death cannot be a fake death or a false death. It must be a real and genuine death. That means that God cannot come to earth and just pretend to be human. He must be an actual human. And so God was conceived. He was born. He grew up. He performed a vocation. He faced temptation. He suffered and He died. His suffering and death were therefore a real suffering and a real death. Therefore your real sins are really paid for. And Jesus had to be both God and man to do it and the fact that He was God and man is what we celebrate at Christmas.

Your salvation depends on the fact that Jesus is God and man.

And the means by which God delivers that salvation to us only works if Jesus is God and man. That means is the one that we celebrate this morning: the Sacrament of the Altar.

In the Sacrament of the Altar Jesus is giving you His body and blood. That cannot happen if Jesus is only God. If Jesus is only God, He is spirit and has no body and no blood to give you to eat and to drink. Therefore in order for the Sacrament of the Altar to work He must be human in order to have body and blood to eat and to drink.

Furthermore the Sacrament of the Altar is the means by which you, His royal priesthood, sanctify yourselves by eating the sacrifice of His body and His blood. In the Old Testament God imparted His holiness to the priests by having them eat of the sin offerings of the people of Israel. Likewise in the New Testament His priests eat of the sacrifice for sin and by doing so God imparts His holiness to you.

In this case Jesus Himself is the sacrifice that takes away sin. Therefore in order for Him to give you of His sacrifice to eat and to drink He has to have died like the sacrifices of the Old Testament. He cannot have died unless He was human. Therefore the Sacrament of the Altar does not work unless He is human.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, then His body and His blood would be moldering somewhere in a grave in the Near East. Therefore Jesus cannot give you His body to eat and His blood to drink unless He rose from the dead. The point of resurrection from the dead is that people do not live on forever as ghosts, but rather that their bodies rise from the dead. So Jesus must be risen from the dead in order for Him to be able to give you His body to eat and His blood to drink. He cannot rise from

the dead unless He is human. Only bodies rise from the dead. In order to have a genuine body and blood to offer you which is risen from the dead, He must be authentically human.

But obviously none of this works unless He is God. If I were living way back when and I told my followers that this bread was my body and this wine was my blood, they would have to draw the conclusion that the whole thing was either symbolic or a farce. The reason is simple, I cannot make bread into my body nor unite my body with bread such that people may consume it. I cannot unite my blood with wine such that people may drink it. I am only human.

Jesus is not only human. Jesus is also divine. He is God. He is the God who commands wind and sea and they obey Him. He is the God who changes water into wine. He is the God through whom all things were made. Therefore He is the God who declares it so and it is so. The same God who said, "Let there be light and there was light," is the same God who says, "This is My body," and it is His body. He furthermore says, "This is My blood of the New Testament," and it is His blood of the New Testament.

This cannot happen unless Jesus is God. And Jesus is God. He is God and man in one person, neither dividing the person nor confusing the substance.

And so the Sacrament of the Altar cannot work at all unless there is Christmas.

And so Christmas is the basis of everything. It is the basis of salvation in our Lord's crucifixion. It is the basis on which that salvation is delivered to us in His Sacrament of the Altar.

And so when you celebrate Christmas, you are celebrating your own salvation. And it is appropriate then that we celebrate it with the Sacrament of the Altar.

In the Name of Jesus. Merry Christmas