

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

I wish I would have purchased the “Charlie Brown Christmas” movie before Apple put it behind its paywall. I haven’t seen it for a number of years. To be sure, there are lots of Christmas movies I have not seen, and other people will have different opinions, but in my humble opinion, “A Charlie Brown Christmas” is the best Christmas movie ever made.

Most of you probably know it, but here’s a brief synopsis: it’s Christmastime, and Charlie Brown is unhappy, even depressed. “I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus. ... I don’t feel the way I’m supposed to feel. I just don’t understand Christmas, I guess.” He thinks it’s too commercialized. Even Charlie Brown’s dog Snoopy is taken by the commercialism of Christmas. Lucy puts Charlie Brown in charge of the school’s Christmas play, but his fellow students aren’t interested in Charlie Brown’s issues. He goes out to buy a tree for the play, but chooses a sad tree, and the others mock him. Charlie Brown says, “I guess you were right, Linus. I shouldn’t have picked this little tree. Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I really don’t know what Christmas is all about.” Then he shouts out, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?” Linus answers, “Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about.” And Linus recites verses from Luke chapter 2. We heard those words last night. Listen again: *“[Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ... And the angel said unto [the shepherds], Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:7, 10-11).

“That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown,” Linus concluded. He’s right, of course, but there’s more to the story than the tender story of Jesus’ birth in the stable, wrapped up in swaddling cloths, announced by the angels, witnessed by the shepherds. It’s the story of the eternal Word penned by John by inspiration. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:1-4, 14).

Two sublime texts, one speaking of a baby born in the fullness of time; the second of a being in incomprehensible eternity ... the one telling us of the birth of One as creature; the second of the uncreated God, by whom all things were created ... the first telling us of the birth of Mary’s firstborn son, a babe of the flesh of

Mary, “*the firstborn among many brothers*” (Rom. 8:29); the second telling us of “*the only Son from the Father,*” One from God Himself, who is of the same substance with the Father, “begotten of the Father from eternity ... begotten, not made” (Nicene Creed), before whom all creation bows the knee. The first tells us of the low estate of His birth with swaddling cloths and a manger for a bed; the second tells us of the glory of the unbegotten One who is full of grace and truth. The first calls Him Savior, Christ the Lord; the second calls Him the eternal Word, and says He took on our flesh.

They speak of the same One, a person, who is eternal Word and mortal flesh; not a thing but a person; not an it, but a Him. He is the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of the Father. John makes it clear. He is a person from the beginning: “*HE was in the beginning with God. All things were made through HIM, and without HIM was not any thing made that was made. In HIM was life....*” “*... we have seen HIS glory.*”

What a great mystery we speak of here: of creator entering into His creation, of eternity bursting into time, of light piercing into the darkness. All mankind were that people living in darkness, which is why “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31), whose unveiled glory not even Moses could see and live (Ex. 33:20). It’s why man stopped walking with God in the Garden ... for fear and shame of their transgressions. And it’s why the Word became living flesh ... for us. For the Word is “*the image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15), the visible icon of God, and in His presence, we too would be consumed by His glory were it not hidden behind flesh. It was for us and for our transgressions that God made haste to help us and appear as flesh among men.

For in His becoming Incarnate, we were the object. It was for our salvation that He so lovingly appeared and was born in a human body. For when God made man in the beginning, He willed that man should abide in their created goodness; but that wasn’t enough for man; and so he despised and rejected that goodness, and devised and contrived evil for himself and his wife. For that, they received the condemnation of death. The earth, once bathed in the Light called forth by the Word, was plunged back into darkness.

But the next time, in the fullness of time, rather than speaking in the darkness and bringing forth light, the Light entered into the world as the Word, that the life of men might give life to those who sit in the shadow of death. Life for man comes now through that which is possible only through God—through the death of the uncreated Word Himself. The Word made flesh redeemed by His shed blood that which He created, a creation mired in death and the darkness of sin.

This Word is not only the “*firstborn of all creation*” (Col. 1:15), but He is also the “*the firstborn from the dead*” (Col. 1:18). And by the “*fullness of God*” (Col. 1:19) in His mortal flesh, and “*by the blood of his cross*” (Col. 1:20), He reconciled all things to Himself, bringing back all things, in heaven and on earth, to their original condition, reestablishing the initial harmony that existed in the beginning and that He desired for His creation.

Creation and redemption are, thus, connected in the Word; and they are further connected in Holy baptism, water and the Word, as He gives rebirth to fallen humanity, sending forth the Spirit once again to hover, now over the baptismal waters, and by them giving us “*the right to become children of God,*” “*born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*” He now calls us sons, who have been re-created by this washing of regeneration and renewal — we who have received Him through this gift, who believe in Him, are heirs having the hope of eternal life.

All of this, too, Charlie Brown, is what Christmas is all about, and it is a cause to shake off your doldrums and celebrate. For that’s what we do on this Christmas day ... we celebrate! O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. We come to receive our Lord, highest most holy, light of light eternal, born of a virgin, a mortal He came. We come to receive the Word of the Father, once in flesh appearing, who by His blood redeemed us, who by water and the Word made us citizens of heaven. We come to receive Him who today comes again with His flesh and blood for us to eat and drink as a foretaste of our inheritance. There is much to celebrate! O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.