

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4)

God Spoke to us Through his Son

A week or two ago, I had a devotion with the preschoolers. I reminded them of the angel who spoke to shepherds in Bethlehem. I wanted them to understand who the message really came from, so I asked them, "How does your mom or dad get messages?" I tried to get them to talk about e-mail and telephone calls and letters. But you know what? It all went over their heads. They had so many other things that they wanted to tell me about that I really don't think I got through to them. I have to say, as much as I love that age, I'm glad we called Mrs. Gorsegner to be our preschool teacher and not me. Since I completely failed to make my point to preschoolers, I'm going to try to make the exact same point to you. Hopefully, you won't be insulted that I'm using the same illustration. Hopefully, you will understand what I'm trying to say. Today, Christmas Day, is all about the way that God communicates his love to us. God has life and love and eternal blessings that he wants to transmit to us. And he doesn't use e-mail to get the message across. He doesn't set up a website or call us on our cell phone. God communicates that love and that eternal life through his Son. And it all began in Bethlehem. In these last days, **God spoke to us through his Son.**

I.

Now, I'm not saying God doesn't speak in the Bible. Every word of the Bible comes from God. It communicates life and salvation to us. But the Bible is all about Jesus – from start to finish! That's true even when it seems like it's talking about something completely unrelated, like Old Testament laws or lists of how many people were in what tribe or who was descended from whom. The writer to the Hebrews says, "**In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways...**" He's talking about the Old Testament. God did speak there. He did it in many different ways. At Mt. Sinai, God descended in fire and smoke and covered the mountain and then he spoke out loud to the nation of Israel. They were so afraid of his voice that they sent Moses up the hill to speak to God in their place. God wrote down the Ten Commandments and sent them back down the mountain to them. God spoke in dreams to Pharaoh and to the King of Babylon. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. God spoke through angels. God spoke to the prophets and had them preach sermons and write letters and even act out messages to his people. God spoke through the priests through a mysterious set of objects called the Urim and the Thummim. Apparently, the priests could ask God questions and he would in some way give his answer with these objects. All of that was God speaking. But now, God has spoken to us another way. In this, the New Testament era, which began in Bethlehem, **God spoke to us through the true Son of God.**

The writer to the Hebrews says something about Jesus that you just can't say about any other being, not even an angel. He says, "**whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.**" The "he" here is God the Father. God the Father appointed his Son heir of all things. Now, God's not going to die some day and then Jesus will then take over. The point here is the authority an heir has. If you work for a company that one man owns, you don't treat his son like any other employee. The son of the owner has authority just because of who he is. Jesus is the heir of all things. He is unique and special. He's the only begotten Son of the Father, the only true Son of the Father, and we treat him with the same respect that we give his Father because the two are equal in power and majesty.

God the Father made all things through the Son. That's who that baby in the manger was – the Creator. During the years that I've been a pastor, I've gotten to hold many babies. I've gotten to baptize many babies. It's one of the real privileges of the ministry. Sometimes I wonder if any of those babies will ever be famous. What if a baby I baptized grows up some day to be the president? What if the baptismal certificate that my wife filled out and that I signed is in a display case in a museum a hundred years from now? How could I have known when I held that baby that he or she would grow up to be great? I couldn't. All I can see on the day I

baptize a child is a baby. If we could've held Jesus on the day he was born, all we would've seen was a baby. We couldn't have seen how much more he was. We couldn't have looked into his eyes and seen the endless ages of eternity that he lived before he took that flesh. He would've looked and sounded and even smelled like an ordinary human baby.

But he was God, the heir and maker of all things. The book of Hebrews says, "**The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...**" He's talking about a relationship that you and I cannot begin to understand. How are the Father and the Son related to each other? The Bible says that the Son is born of the Father. But what does that mean? It says that they are one God and yet three separate persons. The book of Hebrews is trying to make human language express a mystery that is greater than our ability to understand. In Jesus, we see the true glory of God. He is the radiance of the Father. He is the light that shines in the darkness. And he is the exact representation of God's being. The Greek word translated as "exact representation" really means the image that is stamped on a coin. The ancients used a kind of die with a carved image to make coins. When enough force was applied, the coins came out looking exactly like the die.

Jesus shows us what God is really like. He became a human being so that you and I can understand the love that God has for us. When we look in the manger, when we follow Jesus to Sea of Galilee or to the temple courts, when we sit with him at the last supper, when we watch him hanging on the cross and dying there, when we look into his empty tomb and hear the angel say that he is not there, he is risen, in all these things we see that God's love is real. It isn't some abstract concept that we can't wrap our minds around. God's love and his forgiveness are solid and concrete. We can take them home. We see all those things in the Bible. Jesus comes to us in the word. You and I have the greatest and best communication we can ever have from God. We have the Bible and that gives us Jesus. He gives us love and eternal life.

II.

In Bethlehem, God's love appeared to us. God became a human being because that's what we are. But he didn't do that so he can understand us better. He didn't do that just to support us here. The miracle of Christmas is more than just a miracle of solidarity. God became a real human to save us from the death and hell that we brought on ourselves. That, too, began at Bethlehem. The love God communicated to us was real love. That means it was a love that actually did something to help us. **God spoke to us through the Savior of the world.**

Jesus our Savior does all things for us. Because he is true God, he not only created the world, but he sustains it with his powerful word. The world only exists because Jesus tells it to. If he ever were to stop his word, this universe would simply wink out of existence. But Jesus will never allow that to happen. Our Savior keeps the universe in place because we need it to live in.

The book of Hebrews says, "**After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**" This book was written to Jewish Christians, so it speaks in terms that Old Testament believers were familiar with. In the Old Testament, God set up a system of purity laws. If you were unclean or impure in a ceremonial sense, you couldn't come into the temple. You couldn't worship or participate in the sacrifices. What kinds of things made you unclean? Contact with a dead body. Sexual intercourse. A woman's monthly cycle. Certain kinds of skin diseases. And there were many more. Why did God set this system up? These things were symbols of spiritual realities. God was teaching his people about true purity of the heart. Sin makes us unclean and impure. We cannot come into God's presence if we are filthy with sin. He will send us to hell. So we all need to have a spiritual bath.

That's what Jesus came into this world to do. His work wasn't finished until he provided the cleansing we need. Where do we find it? In his blood. That's the part that is so striking in the Old Testament. We modern Americans consider blood to be unclean. Medical waste is full of germs and diseases and it has to be handled with care. We avoid blood. But God pictures the blood of Jesus as the bleach that washes all our sins away and leaves us pure white, totally clean, in his eyes.

Jesus provided that blood on the cross. He gave us a bath there. He died for all the sins of every sinner everywhere. Then he sat down. His work of dying and rising ended, so he went back to heaven to sit next to his Father. But he isn't resting there. He's not on Christmas or Easter vacation. Jesus is working for us, even there. Jesus is still giving his blood to us. Not that he needs to die again. That's over. Jesus now works through the gospel message. He sends that message out to us to cleanse our hearts. Every time we hear about Jesus, God gives us a bath. God washes our sin away in Jesus' blood. God gives our hearts rest and peace.

Jesus is not a baby in a manger any more. Now he sits as the ruler of the universe on his throne in heaven. He is still a true human being. He always will be. But he no longer hides the fact that he is the Son of God behind a baby in a manger or the son of a carpenter. Now he rules all things for us. The book of Hebrews says, **“So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”** The greatest name of all is Jesus. No angel can even come close. Certainly, no human being can. Jesus is God most high. He is the Son of God and equal to his Father in all things. He loved us and did all things so that we will live with him forever.

And it all began in Bethlehem. The baby born there did all that we need. That baby is who we have come to worship today. We rejoice to know him and see him with eyes of faith. That baby was the first step of the Son of God to the cross and the empty tomb. Today we praise him and celebrate his glory. Amen.