

Christmas Day, 2008

Text: John 1:1-14

Title: Something New for Christmas

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By now many of you have opened your Christmas presents. You've torn through the wrapping paper and ribbons, opened boxes and cards to see what this Christmas has brought for you. If not yet, then perhaps later today.

Imagine getting the same thing for Christmas every year. Imagine if year after year you got the same present. And I don't mean the same type of present- a tie, perfume, whatever. And I don't even mean receive a duplicate, so that you now have two, three or four of the same thing. Imagine getting the exact same thing wrapped under the tree. Imagine if your spouse went through your closet, your dresser, or your jewelry box and re-wrapped the same thing year after year.

That wouldn't be exciting. There wouldn't be any surprise. After awhile you wouldn't even bother to open it, because you knew exactly what you were getting. This wouldn't be Christmas. It's hard to even imagine someone doing such a thing, except maybe as a prank.

Christmas is a time for something new. Brand new, out of the package. Nothing recycled, no hand-me downs, but something new.

Love always looks for something new, a new gift to surprise and excite. Something special just for your beloved that is for them and no one else. A gift that is personal, unique, and new.

Christmas is about a new start. You might remember your first Christmas in a new house, or a first Christmas with your husband or wife, your child or grandchild.

Christmas is time for a new start, a new beginning.

In the beginning, in the very beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God made everything from scratch, everything out of nothing. Everything was new, fresh, not a scratch on it.

In Genesis everything was good. Everything was perfect. Everything was new, and what is most incredible is that it stayed new. Nothing got old. Nothing wore out. It was as new and fresh and pristine every day as when it had been created.

But sin entered the world and problems soon followed. The newness was gone, and everything became old and damaged and rusty and dirty. Adam and Eve grew old and died. The world became a tired, dying place. The author of Ecclesiastes says with frustration: there is nothing

new under the sun! What a terrible world to live in, where everything is old, and there is nothing new!

And so at Christmas, God makes a new start. God comes into our old, dying world to make all things new.

John begins his gospel like this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John starts at the beginning. But it's a new. He does a new Genesis. When Jesus comes He comes to make things new, to recreate all things.

And you can't get any more new than a new baby. A new baby brings life and hope. It's the start of a new generation. That child has endless possibilities, a clean slate, a whole life ahead of him.

With a new baby comes all the new firsts of a child's life. The first words, the first steps, the first day of school. Everything is new. All of these new firsts bring joy and light to a child's eyes and he does something new for the first time.

Jesus' birth is a new start for Mary and Joseph, but it's also a new start for the whole world. The good news is for all people. For everyone looking for something new. It was something new for the shepherds and they hurried to the manger to see the newborn. It was new for the Magi, who hurried to Bethlehem to see the child.

But there were those who tried to hold on to the old, Herod, for one, and then the Pharisees, and many other people in Israel who missed out on Jesus. They were too attached to the old, dying world to receive something new.

Jesus comes to bring back the newness of Eden. To recreate and restore what has been made old by sin. He will bring about a new heaven and a new earth, with a new capital city- the new Jerusalem. His people will sing a new song, as the Lord declares, "Behold, I am making everything new."

Are you looking for a new start this Christmas? Are you tired of this old, dying world? Do you need someone, something new in your life to give you hope?

Jesus comes to you today to make you new again. He comes to give you a new, fresh start.

Jesus does this through His Word. The word of God made the heavens and the earth. God spoke and it was. Let there be and there was. Let there be light and there was light. Let there be land, and there was land. Let there be trees and flowers, and ferns and cactus and broccoli, let there be fish and birds, worms and octopi, weasels and woodchucks and elephants. And there were.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus is that Word, spoken by God in the beginning, that made the heavens and the earth. Now that Word comes to earth in flesh and blood. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Jesus continued to make things new by His word. He says to the sick- be healed. He says to the leper, be clean. He says to the dead, get up. And it happens. The sick are healed, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised.

His word bears His Spirit. That Spirit brings life and light. The same Spirit that breathed life into Adam fills Jesus' lungs, and when He speaks, it is so.

And Jesus continues to speak today. The Word that spoke creation into existence, the word that was made flesh, the word that healed the sick and raised the dead now speaks to you. Jesus continues to make all things new by His word. "I baptize you." "I forgive you." "This is my body." "This is my blood." These words bring about the new creation.

Just as the Lord spoke into the darkness and nothingness and brought forth all creation, He now speaks to you and makes you new.

St. John continues, "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."

If you're looking for a new start, a new beginning, if you'd like to be born again and start all over, the Lord does that for you here. He breathes His Spirit into you through His Word. Every week He gives you a new, fresh start. Every week He wipes the slate clean and makes everything new. He teaches you a new song to sing. He dresses you in new clothes. You leave this place a new person.

You may not get everything you want this Christmas. This New Year may be disappointing for you. But if you're looking for a new start, if you'd like a new song to sing, if you want to be a completely new person, then this is the place for you. The Lord of beginnings spoke a world into creation, He spoke His Son into a Virgin's womb, and He will speak a new beginning for you this Christmas.