



## **Christ Lutheran Church**

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

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Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

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### ***“Breaking the Silence.” – St. John 1:43-51***

*Second Sunday after the Epiphany – January 14, 2008*

**Pastor Chip Winter**

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the gospel appointed for the second Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord and already read for us from St. John's account.

My dear family in Christ, when the prophet Malachi dies, the Word of the Lord fell silent, in a sense. No longer was the Word of the Lord to be heard spoken through a living prophet. There was no one on whom the Spirit of YHWH had come to rest. The tongues of the prophets were stilled and the Word of the Lord was thus not uttered for four hundred years. (Long, uncomfortable pause).

Silence makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? That can be the case especially in a worship service. Some of you may have been wondering what was going on: did someone forget their cue to play some music, or had I lost my place. We don't like the silence when someone is supposed to be speaking.

Imagine, then, how the children of Israel must have felt. This was no ordinary silence. The voice of God, which had been heard regularly through the prophets, was now silent for four hundred years. Four hundred years ago was 1618: when the thirty years war began, when Australia was first sighted by ship, when Sir Walter Raleigh is executed for treason.

Sometimes being alone in one's thoughts can be soothing; there's a blessing in solitude. But when silence goes on too long it can devastate the mind and heart – destroying marriages, ruining friendships and ending careers.

If God is silent, where is my hope? Are His previous promises still good? Has God abandoned us? It was a terrible, godly silence.

But then, at just the right time, the voice was back. The silence was broken, just as Isaiah had foretold – “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD...” It is the preaching of John the Baptist, drawing people to understand that a Greater One is coming. Everything that Moses and the prophets said is to come is coming to pass right now! Get ready and hold on, for as Bachman Turner Overdrive once put it, ***‘You ain’t seen nothin’, yet!’***

With fire and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Messiah comes. But instead of being terrible and awesome to behold, He comes as a lamb. **“Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.”** The Messiah, with gentleness, heals and teaches. In lowliness and humility, the Messiah calls disciples and raises the dead to life. Gentiles following, sinners adoring the little children will call Him **“Son of David.”** He touches the leprous. He washes feet. To be the Lamb of God means to be lowly and gentle and humble to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In this world we sinners need this Lamb Who also happens to be the Good Shepherd, because our enemy stalks us with cold efficiency. From our birth the enemy is doing his evil best to keep us or return us to the spiritual corpses we were in our original sin. Satan's purpose is to fill your soul with darkness and make sin seem like the good, right and worthy thing to do. When this happens, we ignore the importance of God's Word for our faith and life. We ignore and mistreat others, as if they weren't someone for whom Jesus died and rose again. These, and all other sins, are

a big deal. They're a personal offense to God. Sin is a God-sized problem and we are nowhere near big enough to solve it. If we understand this at all, we are left speechless.

After all those centuries of silence, after our own penitential silence, we now hear the new voice. We hear the voice of THE Prophet. We hear the voice of God, Himself. We hear Jesus of Nazareth. John had pointed to Him, told us to listen to Him, and now Jesus' own voice shatters the silence.

Jesus invites Andrew to come and see, and Andrew did. He came, he saw, he heard and stayed...and then brought his brother, Simon. Simon heard Jesus call him by a new name, Peter, the Rock, and Peter followed. Then Jesus called to Philip, "Follow me!" and Philip did.

Philip then tells Nathanael. The long-promised Messiah has come into the world and shattered the silence. In Jesus the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 will come to pass on the night of His betrayal. Isaiah foretells what He will suffer. Nathan tells David that his kingdom will be forever, which it does in the triumphant resurrection.

With the incarnation of God and the revealing light of Epiphany, Christ Jesus invades the world and the kingdom of the enemy has no chance. The invasion of God is one where the only cry is that of a baby being born. There are no monstrous machines of war, but rather a tiny hand that grasps mother and father's hands. No uniforms with medals, ribbons or stars, but rather strips of common cloth to swaddle a newborn.

Christ Jesus will save those who trust in Him, just as Moses and prophets said. He will save them by dying for them. On that hill called Calvary, it looked as if Satan had won the battle. The Messiah was beaten, wounded and nailed to a cross. The Son of Mary looked to the sky and shouted for His Father, but the heaven was silent.

Then, on the third day, the silence of heaven was shattered. It was broken by the sound of an earthquake. The silence was broken by the announcement of an angel, **“He is not here, for He has risen”** (Matthew 28:6). Death and grave were no match for this Lamb, this Savior the Christ. And He is ours. He is for us forever.

After all the centuries of silence some eagerly hear, **“We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”** But others answer like Nathanael: **“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”** With our God-sized problem, it’s still easy to be tempted to hold out for a voice more our liking.

Thankfully, we have St. Paul to remind us (Colossians 1:17), **“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** And Jesus’ own voice promised Nathanael, **“Truly, truly I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”**

What Moses preached and what the prophets declared is the final, ultimate and eternal yes to all of God’s promises. All history of heaven and earth comes to its apex Christ Jesus our Lord. The Child of Bethlehem, bathed in the light of Epiphany, redeems you and me. And soon enough, Nathanael too believed, **“Rabbi, you are the son of God! You are the King of Israel!”**

You also trust Him. By grace alone, through faith, this Christ forgives you, strengthens you, and saves you for all eternity.

Repent, and believe the Good News! The silence of heaven has been shattered! Get ready, for Jesus is coming! Amen.