**God Incarnate**

***God’s Christ Comes Enfleshed***

Mid-week Advent 2 – 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As God declared to Adam and Eve the consequences of their disobedience, He also proclaimed that Eve’s “seed” would crush the head of Satan. An offspring of human flesh, but without the natural use of a man, would defeat the power of Satan – sin and death. This seed would however show the damage of the struggle – a bruised heel.

In our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah, we hear an amazing prophecy of what the Lord God is going to do. It echoes, and makes more clear, the promise that a man would not have a part in the conception of the One who would destroy sin and death. God speaks, “*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”*

This sign, a miraculous event, would come from the Lord God Himself. God would make this to happen. A virgin will conceive! She will bear in her womb, and give birth to a son. His name shall be Immanuel. Immanuel means, God with us!

Do you understand the implications of this prophecy, what exactly God is declaring in it?

If we jump ahead approximately 700 years to when the prophecy is being fulfilled, we find Joseph, who is betrothed to Mary, struggling emotionally and mentally. The woman he is to marry is pregnant (by the Holy Spirit, Matthew tells us), but at the time, all Joseph knows is that he had nothing to do with it! God sends “an angel” to Joseph, *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son; and you shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”* (Mt. 1:20-21)

Matthew records a bit more after the angel departs from Joseph. *Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: “Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they shall name Him Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”* (Mt. 1:22-23)

This Child which Mary bears in her body, which will be born and seen as the son of Mary and Joseph, is actually very God of very God. This Child is one substance with the Father. He is the One by whom all things were made. He is the One who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the virgin Mary and was made man.

It is the 2nd Person of the Trinity that takes on human flesh. It is this 2nd Person of the Trinity whose birth we will celebrate sixteen days. Why will we celebrate it? Why do we even care about this One Child born of Mary?

I remember being told on a couple occasions by different people that I had ruined their Christmas Eve because I had spoken about the events of Good Friday being meted out upon the Child whose birth was being celebrated. How dare I proclaim that this Child born of Mary is the Son of God who came for but one reason – to die upon the cross to purchase our forgiveness and free us from God’s wrath against sin, and bestowing eternal life.

Truly, I continue to “ruin Christmas” because it is pointless to celebrate that birth without a full accounting of why He was born – why He is God Incarnate – why God chose to take on human flesh?

We care about Jesus because it is He who created us! He made us in His image! Then, in that very same flesh, He humbles Himself to live as we live. He denies Himself the full use of His divine majesty and power. He submits Himself to the very same eternal Law which God commands all mankind to submit. Only there is one difference, He fulfills that Law, He submits Himself to it perfectly. Submitting also to the authority of human laws, keeping them perfectly.

Having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, His is the only perfect flesh – the image of God restored, the second Adam. As we heard in our Epistle lesson, *in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.* In the person of Jesus, God takes on human flesh. He is perfect and holy, there is no sin in Him. There is no reason for death, for without sin, He has not earned those wages.

As true God Incarnate, as true God in human flesh, He is able to redeem all mankind from the wages they deserve by their sinfulness – death and eternal separation from Him for eternity. Jesus restores the image so that we may be made complete in Him.

Jesus submits Himself, God in human flesh, to the punishment for sinfulness that we deserve. He takes our sinfulness into Himself. He sheds His blood for our failures to keep the Law beginning with His fulfilling of the Law in His circumcision on the 8th day. He is baptized into our sinfulness, cleansing all water to make it a life-giving flood that brings to us healing in our baptism.

Jesus is tempted in every was as we are, but without sin. Finally, in jealousy, anger, and sinfulness, evil men falsely accuse Him. Bringing Him before Pilate, they lie about him. Pilate, knowing Jesus’ innocence, has Him flogged near unto death. But Pilate finally acquiesces to their desires, make Him bear His cross out to Golgotha, has Him stripped and crucified like a vile criminal.

Jesus bears our sin! He suffers our punishment! He dies our death! In our flesh, He is buried – taking our sins into His tomb and burying them there.

Our heavenly Father accepts the sacrifice of His own Son in our flesh and raises Him on the third day. Raised from the dead, He is glorified in the same flesh in which He was conceived – your flesh and mine. His resurrection points forward to the gift of a glorious and perfecting resurrection for all those who love and trust in Him as their Savior.

As we creep forward toward Christmas, it is to celebrate God Incarnate, God in human flesh, Immanuel – God with us.

Dearly beloved of God, in Jesus *dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

In Christ Jesus, the Image of God is restored in you. This is why God’s Christ came in human flesh, to restore His image to perfection. That perfection is imparted to you in the forgiveness of sins He purchased in that flesh, and bestows to you in your flesh.

You are alive together with Him – forgiven and redeemed.

You are alive together with Him – His image restored and perfected in you, to be gloriously displayed in your resurrected flesh on the last day.

You are made alive together with Him today, that in Him, in your flesh – you might live in love and thankfulness to Him. As He dwells in you, by Him you live in love and service to your neighbor. Amen.