**Word and Sacrament**

***God’s Christ Comes Enfleshed***

12.16.2020

Mid-week Advent 3 – 2020

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

There are two events described for us in the Old Testament and Gospel lessons which are more intimately connected than first appearances would declare. These two events are also more intimately connected than many Christians want to make them.

You are probably wondering, “Why is that? Why do some Christians not connect them?” Because too many who claim to be Christians view Christianity as a way of life by which people become right with God. They view Christ as the teacher and the One who forgives sins, so that they are freed to do their part to complete the task of their salvation. Others do not like to find any intimate connection between Old and New Testaments of Scripture.

Thankfully even our Epistle lesson helps bring this into tighter focus for us. What a blessing it is to gather together today so that we can see how God has planned from eternity that Christ enfleshed comes to us as Word and Sacrament.

Let us examine things together, walking through these texts to come to greater understanding and deeper appreciation of God’s work in our lives today.

We can begin by asking, “How did God create all that is?” We know He did so by speaking things into existence. He spoke animals, male and female, into existence and told them to be fruitful and multiply.

Man was made differently. God created man by forming him from dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils His own breath to bring him to life. For what reason was woman made in a different manner? God had to know that there was going to be no “helper comparable to him” in all the animals that He brought to Adam to name. Why not just make woman from the start, also from the dust of the ground, with life breathed into her? Why different?

Listen again to how God created Adam’s bride. *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* (Gen. 2:21-24)

Why this manner of creating her? Why take her out of man? Why make her one flesh with Adam? Jesus gives us a clue a clue when He addresses those who think that their works earn them eternal life. He says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” (John 5:39-40)

Jesus, True God, is declaring that when we look at what is written in the Scriptures which were present when He spoke these words to those present, those Scriptures were testifying about Him. This means that the creation of Eve is primarily testifying about God’s Christ, Jesus. God’s Word in our OT lesson is not simply about how He creates Adam’s wife. Believing that Jesus is correct – He is after all True God – is there something which can help us understand this passage from the Old Testament in a Christological manner?

How about if we look at what God was pointing forward to with the creation of Eve. It is right here in this week’s Gospel lesson. Listen to a portion of it again. “W*hen they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.” And again, another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”* (Jn. 19:33-37)

Let me put it together for you.

God put Adam into a deep sleep – Jesus fell into the deep sleep of death.

God drew forth a rib from Adam’s side and created Eve, Adam’s bride – Christ, the Word of God enfleshed’s side was pierced and out flowed blood and water – baptism and the blood of the Lord’s Supper – those things which made the Bride of Christ, The Church.

Possibly some of you are thinking, “Hmmm, I think that is a stretch! That’s just your interpretation, pastor.”

Really? What I read Jesus declared in John 5 is that all the Scriptures testify about Him. Again, the Scriptures which existed when He was speaking were only what we call the Old Testament. So, when we look at the Old Testament, we really need to be looking for Jesus.

But if that is not proof enough, then let us look at God’s Word through John’s pen in our Epistle lesson.

It is written there: *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

 *This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*

 *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* (1 Jn 5:4-12)

How is one born of God? Baptism! We have Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus in John 3 which makes that clear.

What are the three that bear witness on earth to Jesus as the Son of God? These bear witness in us.

First, the Spirit – who we know comes in the Word of Christ proclaimed, working and strengthening faith.

Second, the water – is that just water as we find it all over, or water connected with the Word? In other words, Baptism, baptized into Christ.

And finally, the blood. Which blood is this? There is only one blood it could be, and that is the blood of Christ. Some suggest it as the blood of Christ shed upon the cross, symbolically covering sin. Or this blood something much more? It is the blood of Christ given to us to drink in the Supper He institutes of His Body and Blood.

We have this witness of the Son in ourselves. We have the eternal life in His Son, given into us, testified in us. And if we do not have the Son, we do not have life.

Dearly beloved of God what a joy it is to be in the world and not of the world. This is the week of Gaudete – rejoice in the Lord week – we rejoice to know that being born of God we overcome the world.

I have heard it repeated by a number of people the past couple weeks as I have been out and about, that Christmas is not happening this year, that COVID has crushed Christmas, that COVID is stopping Christmas. That is pure silliness.

If Christmas were a worldly holiday, then maybe COVID could stop it.

If Christmas were about that rotund, jolly, old, elf and the gifts he supposedly brings, then maybe COVID could stop it.

If Christmas were only about getting together with family, then maybe COVID could stop it.

Christmas is about God’s Christ coming into our flesh to redeem us from sin and death.

Our redemption comes, Christmas comes, whether we get together with family or not

– whether there are gifts under the tree or not

– whether Santa gets the sleigh started or not.

Christ was born, and He comes and gives us the greatest gifts – forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. He gives us these gifts in the Word we hear, His body we eat, and in His blood we drink.

Christ is together with His bride, He is together with us, today and every time we gather together in His name. He comes as the Word we hear, His Spirit testifying to us of our new relationship to Him as His bride, the beloved of God – One Flesh with Him – forgiven, redeemed, and holy.

When we repeat the words of the invocation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we are again washed clean in the waters of our baptism, our wedding garments cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

Gather at the table our Lord sets before us of His body and blood, we are gathered at the wedding banquet feast of the Lamb.

What a joy to be in Christ! What a joy that He comes to us again in Word and Sacrament! What a joy to know He has overcome the world for us, and in us – and in Him we have eternal life! Amen.