

The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day, A^WD 2010

John 1:1-14

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Now praise we Christ, the Holy One,
 The blessed Virgin Mary's Son,
 Far as the glorious sun doth shine,
 E'en to the world's remote confine.

This is a compelling mystery and a wonderful truth. God has become man. The Lord has descended to dwell with us and to make us His brothers. How can it be that the Creator would descend to His creation? Why would it be that God would condescend to don human flesh?

 He who Himself all things did make
 A servant's form vouchsafed to take
 That He as man mankind might win
 And save His creatures from their sin.

Can your mind understand that God would give Himself for men or that the Creator would deem His creatures' lives more important than his own? This is the opposite of logical. Christmas is not how you would do things. To save a thief, would you get arrested for stealing? Or would you teach him not to rob? To save a murderer, would you let yourself be given the death penalty? Or would you try to show him the value of human life? You wouldn't save a murderer, or a thief, or a child molester, or the guy who fantasizes about your wife, or the kid who beat up your kid, or the teacher who favors the other students, or the coworker who lied to get promoted over you, or the guy who cut you off in traffic. You would damn any of them in an instant.

 The grace and power of God the Lord
 Upon the mother was outpoured;
 A virgin pure and undefiled
 In wondrous wise conceived a child.

No, Christmas is not your way of doing things, which is why you so desperately need Christmas. Christmas changes everything. God became man. In the beginning was the Word, the Second Person of the eternal Triune God. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, And we have seen His glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. That's the account of the Lord's Nativity as St. John records it. No angels, shepherds, or even a manger. Not even a Joseph or a Mary. John's details are sparse, and yet they stretch all the way back to Genesis: In the beginning. The Word of God became flesh.

 The noble mother bore a Son,
 For so did Gabriel's promise run,
 Whom John confessed and leaped with joy
 Ere yet the mother knew her boy.

Your Christmas way of doing things is to ignore the problems. If you write a once-a-year-check, drop some coins in the red bucket, and donate your old clothes, you can ignore the poverty in the world. If you cook a fancy enough meal, you can ignore your uncle's alcoholism, your dad's live-in girlfriend, your daughter's drug problem, your own credit card debt. If you turn the Christmas music on, it will drown out your doubts, your fears, your worries. That's been your way of dealing with sin since your first parents fell into sin in the paradise of Eden: to ignore it and downplay it. But God's way of dealing with sin is different. He promised Eve her Seed would crush the serpent's head. So He came to do just that. The Lord's Christmas way of doing things is to get into the mess of humanity, to immerse Himself completely in the mire. His Christmas way of doing things is His incarnational way of doing things: taking on human flesh.

Upon a manger filled with hay
In poverty content He lay;
With milk was fed the Lord of all,
Who feeds the ravens when they call.

This is the Christmas way of things. He whom the heavens cannot contain is placed into a manger. The Eternal Word of God is speechless until He learns to speak. He who nourishes His creation must be nursed at His mother's breast. The One born to save His people from the filth of sin and death must have his swaddling clothes changed when He soils them. If He had not been born in time, you would have been dead for eternity.

The heavenly choirs rejoice and raise
Their voice to God in songs of praise.
To humble shepherds is proclaimed
The Shepherd who the world hath framed.

So the angels sing. God wasn't made an angel; they don't rejoice for their sakes, but for yours. God became man. The Son of God became the Son of Mary. The Second Person of the Trinity limited Himself to human flesh. The Creator slept in a manger, a feed trough. This is His Christmas way of doing things: not to ignore humanity's sin, not to let men get what they deserve for their sinful rebellion, but to take the place of sinful humanity. His Christmas way of doing things is also His Good Friday way of doing things. Jesus wasn't born to make Christmas merry and bright any other way than by dying for sinners. He took human flesh to lay down His life for humanity.

All honor unto Christ be paid,
Pure Offspring of the favored maid,
With Father and with Holy Ghost,
Till time in endless time be lost.

The Word who Became flesh, who gave His flesh as the price to redeem sinners, was by no mere coincidence placed in a feed trough to spend his first nights outside the safety of His mother's womb. Later He would tell the crowds "The bread that I give for the life of the world is my flesh. If anyone eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks His blood, He will live forever. If you want the blessings of Christmas, this is God's Christmas way of doing things, His incarnational way of interacting with His creation. If you want the forgiveness of sins, don't go to Bethlehem, nor to Calvary. At Calvary, Jesus won the forgiveness of sins, but He does not deliver it there. If you want the forgiveness of sins, go to

the Altar. Forgiveness is not won at the Altar, but it is distributed there. Jesus gives you His true flesh for food and His true blood for drink. It's His Christmas way of doing things. Merry Christmas.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Jeff Hemmer