

IN THE WORDS OF A CHRISTMAS HYMN, JESUS IS- THE ONE WHO WAS:

“BORN IN THE NIGHT, MARY’S CHILD, A LONG WAY FROM HOME. COMING IN NEED, MARY’S CHILD, BORN IN A BORROWED ROOM.”

TONIGHT, ON THIS HOLY NIGHT, LET US GATHER TO PRAISE GOD, AS WE THINK ABOUT THE PRICELESS GIFT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

THERE WAS A POEM WRITTEN BY A WOMAN NAMED HOLLY GERTH ON ONE OF THE CHRISTMAS CARDS I RECEIVED THIS YEAR. SHE WROTE:

“HE CAME NOT TO A THRONE, BUT TO A MANGER. HE LIVED NOT AS A KING, BUT AS A SERVANT. HE CHOSE NOT A KINGDOM, BUT A CROSS. HE GAVE NOT JUST A LITTLE, BUT EVERYTHING.”

JESUS, WHOSE NAME IN HEBREW MEANS “SAVIOR” IS ALSO CALLED “EMMANUEL”, MEANING “GOD WITH US.”

JESUS IS THE ONE WHO WAS BORN IN BETHELEHEM ONE NIGHT, AS GOD’S GIFT OF HIMSELF TO THE WORLD.

HE CAME INTO THE WORLD AS GOD INCARNATE, WRAPPED IN HUMAN FLESH-BORN AS ONE OF US.

ON THAT NIGHT THE GREAT BARRIER THAT SEPARATED CREATOR FROM CREATION, GOD FROM THOSE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE, CAME TUMBLING DOWN.

IT DID SO WHEN A TINY HELPLESS BABY TOOK HIS FIRST BREATH.

FOR IN THAT ORDINARY OCCURRENCE OF A NEWBORN INFANT’S FIRST CRY-THE SILENT NIGHT WAS SHATTERED BY THE VOICE OF GOD-IN A WAY NEVER HEARD BEFORE.

HE WAS BORN TO BE ACCESSIBLE TO ORDINARY PEOPLE SO THAT WE CAN NOW APPROACH THE ONCE INAPPROACHABLE HOLY GOD, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

YES, IN JESUS, GOD BENDS DOWN TO US IN LOVE AND MERCY. JESUS IS GOD ALMIGHTY, COMING TO EARTH IN HUMILITY SO THAT HE MIGHT SAVE US FROM OUR SIN.

A MINISTER NAMED RICK ADAMS OFFERS HIS OWN REFLECTION ON THE EVENT, WRITING:

“...ON A COLD NIGHT IN A STABLE IN BETHLEHEM SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT WOULD FOREVER CHANGE THE WORLD.

WITH ONE LAST PUSH...A TIRED AND WORN YOUNG WOMAN, WHO HAD FOUND FAVOR IN GOD’S EYES, GAVE BIRTH TO THE ONE WHO WOULD BEAR THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

AS THE FIRST BREATH OF LIFE ENTERED THE TINY LUNGS OF THE REDEEMER, OUT CAME A CRY THAT MADE ALL OF HEAVEN CHEER AND ALL OF HELL TREMBLE IN FEAR....”

TRULY, JESUS IS THE GREATEST, THE MOST PRECIOUS CHRISTMAS PRESENT EVER GIVEN OR RECEIVED. HE IS THE ONLY GIFT THAT REALLY COUNTS.

THE COSTLY GIFTS OF THE MAGI, THE MOST EXPENSIVE OR DESIRED PRESENT ANYONE COULD EVER RECEIVE, FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE VALUE OF GOD’S GIFT OF HIMSELF IN JESUS.

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR, IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES, AND IN THE WORLD.

THIS IS THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIANITY, AND ONE BASIS FOR THE CLAIM OF SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

IT ISN’T THAT OTHER RELIGIONS HAVE NO VALUE OR NO TRUTH, THEY DO HOLD SOME THINGS THAT ARE TRUE OR TEACHINGS THAT CAN BE VALUABLE.

BUT ONLY CHRISTIANITY PRESENTS THE TRUTH OF GOD MAKING HIS WAY DOWN TO US IN JESUS, IN ORDER TO BECOME OUR SAVIOR.

AND JESUS INVITES US ALLOW HIM TO REMAIN WITHIN US ALWAYS, FOR THAT IS THE REASON HE CAME TO EARTH, AND THUS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION.

YES, IN JESUS, GOD STEPPED DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND MADE HIMSELF ACCESSIBLE TO COMMON PEOPLE- TO YOU AND ME.

TRULY, CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT GOD GIVING- AND US RECEIVING.

THIS WAS THE MESSAGE THE ANGELS BROUGHT TO THE SHEPHERDS ON THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

BUT THEIR WORDS OF COMFORT AND JOY, HOPE AND PEACE WERE NOT MEANT FOR THEM OR THEIR TIME ALONE, ANYMORE THAN THE WORDS DELIVERED BY ISAIAH ONLY APPLIED TO THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH.

INSTEAD, THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET AND THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGELS ARE FOR ALL PEOPLE-OF EVERY TIME AND PLACE.

YES INDEED "TO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY" APPLIES TO YOU AND ME, AND ALL THE WORLD.

IT WAS FOR OUR SAKES A CHILD WAS BORN, GOD'S SON TO BE OUR SAVIOR, WAS GIVEN.

AND THE CHILD WHOSE BIRTH WE CELEBRATE, IN WHOM WE RECEIVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS CALLED BY MANY OTHER NAMES:

HE IS - "WONDERFUL COUNSELOR" BECAUSE HE SHOWS US THE WAY OUT OF DARKNESS, AND EMPOWERS US TO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF HIS LOVE.

HE IS THE INCARNATION OF THE CREATOR, WHO TOOK PART IN CREATION, AND THIS MAKES HIM NOT ONLY HUMAN BUT ALSO OUR "MIGHTY GOD".

AND CHRIST OUR KING IS AN "EVERLASTING FATHER-FOR HE AND GOD THE FATHER ARE ONE.

AND JESUS IS LIKE A CARING, GUIDING, CORRECTIVE, AND PROTECTIVE FATHER.

HE ALSO IS THE "PRINCE OF PEACE' BECAUSE HE MAKES PEACE POSSIBLE BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND GOD, BY HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION.

IN ALL THESE WAYS AND MORE JESUS IS A PERSONAL GIFT FROM GOD TO US AND ALL PEOPLES.

JESUS IS THE ONE WHO DELIVERS US FROM SPIRITUAL DARKNESS IF WE OPEN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO HIM AND HIS LOVE.

A WOMAN NAMED KITTY CHAPPELL REMINDS US ABOUT THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS AND THE GIFT GOD SENDS TO US IN JESUS, HIS SON, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU HAD A BIRTHDAY AND ALL THE PEOPLE YOU LOVED GAVE YOU A PARTY, BUT DIDN'T INVITE YOU?"

AND ALL THE PEOPLE AT THE PARTY GAVE GIFTS, BUT FORGOT ABOUT YOU, AND ALL SPOKE MUCH OF LOVE, BUT DIDN'T LOVE YOU?"

AND ALL THE PEOPLE SEARCHED FOR PEACE, BUT COULD FIND NONE BECAUSE YOUR GIFT WAS PEACE-BUT YOU WEREN'T INVITED?"

THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS IS THAT JESUS, THE SAVIOR, WAS BORN FOR EACH ONE OF US, EVEN IF WE DO NOT YET KNOW IT, OR EVER UNDERSTAND IT.

YES, NO MATTER WHO WE ARE. GOD, THE CREATOR OF ALL, ENTERED TIME AND HUMAN HISTORY, BECAUSE GOD LOVES THE WORLD.

THIS IS THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS AND ALL WE GIVE AND RECEIVE IN THIS SEASON.

YES, THROUGH THE BIRTH AND LIFE, THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF HIS SON, GOD HAS BLESSED EVERYONE OF US.

AND THIS BLESSING CAME INTO THE WORLD ON WHAT WE NOW CALL CHRISTMAS. MAY WE WELCOME GOD'S WONDERFUL GIFT.

LET US PRAY:

GOD OF MYSTERY AND MIGHT, WE PRAISE AND WORSHIP YOU, FOR YOU CAME IN SILENCE, WHILE ALL LAY SLEEPING, TO ENTER OUR WORLD AS A CHILD OF HUMBLE BIRTH.

IN HIS FACE WE BEHOLD YOUR GLORY, FOR IN HIS LIFE AS IN HIS DEATH IS YOUR GIFT OF SALVATION.

BY YOUR SPIRIT, FILL OUR HEARTS WITH THANKSGIVING, THAT WE MAY GIVE AS WE HAVE RECEIVED.

WE PRAY FOR ALL THOSE WHO NEED TO KNOW YOUR LOVE AND GRACE IN CHRIST, AND FOR THOSE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO NEED HEALING OR COMFORT OR STRENGTH.

BE WITH THEM, WE PRAY, AND GRANT THEM ALL YOUR PEACE AND MERCY, ACCORDING TO YOUR WISDOM AND WILL FOR THEM.

RECEIVE, WE PRAY, THE OUR THANKS AND PRAISE FOR YOUR GRACE-FILLED LOVE SENT TO US IN JESUS, WHO IS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR, LORD OF LORDS, AND KING OF KINGS. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: LUKE 2:1-20 & ISAIAH 9:2-7

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