

CHRISTmass Morning 2008 (*The Birth of the Blessed One – 3*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy [LK 2.10], said the angel at the birth of our Savior – as we heard last night. Great indeed is the joy thus announced – greater than the human mind can conceive. It was a dreadful thing for us to lie under the holy wrath of God ... to be led captive by the devil at his will ... and to be under the sentence of eternal condemnation – it was more dreadful still that mankind was ignorant of his awful condition ... or utterly indifferent to it. And now the angel brings good tidings that the Word had come into the world ... Who will free us from all these evils. That eternal Word (now in time Incarnate) came as the Physician to the spiritually sick ... as the Redeemer to the captives of sin ... as the Way to those who had wandered afar off ... as the Life to the dead in trespasses and sins ... and as Savior to the lost. As Moses was sent by the Lord to deliver the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt [EXO 3.10], so was Christ sent by the Father to redeem mankind from our bondage to the devil. As the dove – after the waters of the flood had abated from the face of the earth – brought back an olive leaf to Noah in the ark [GEN 8.11], so Christ came to earth to preach peace and reconciliation between man and God.

Well may we rejoice, then, and magnify the mercy of our God. What good thing will He – Who loved us while we were yet His enemies [ROM 5.8] – withhold from those who are partakers of Him of the same flesh ... seeing that His did not disdain to take our human nature into the very closest union with His divinity? Who has ever hated His own flesh [EPH 5.29]? How can He possibly cast us off, when by an exercise of such exalted and infinite mercy, He has made us partakers of His own nature by taking our nature into Himself?

Who in most exalted thought can reach this great mystery – that ***the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us*** [JN 1.14] – much less adequately express it in words? Here we have set in great contrast the most exalted sublimity and the most base vileness; the greatest power and the most abject helplessness; the most glorious majesty and the most inglorious weakness. What can be more sublime than God, or more vile than man? Who has more power than God, or greater moral helplessness than man? Who can be so glorious as God, and so weak as man? But that sublime power devises a plan of redemption, which unites all these elements, when infinite justice required such a union. What finite mind can grasp the greatness of this mystery? An adequate ransom, infinite in value, was demanded for man's offense ... since man had turned himself away from God the infinite Good – but what could be an adequate satisfaction to an infinite God? Therefore infinite Justice takes from Itself, as it were, an adequate satisfaction offered by Itself – God the Creator suffers in human flesh, lest we who are the

work of His hands should suffer eternally. Infinite Good was offended – therefore, no one but a Mediator of infinite power could intercede for us. And who is infinite but God alone? Consequently, God reconciled the world unto Himself [2COR 5.19] ... God Himself became the Mediator ... God Himself redeemed mankind with His own Blood [ACTS 20.28].

Who can understand this marvelous mystery? The almighty Creator had been offended, and yet the creature who committed the offense manifested no anxiety for a propitiation or reconciliation; but He Who had been offended assumed our flesh to make reconciliation for us. Man had forsaken God, and allied himself to the devil, God's bitter enemy; and yet He, Who had been thus deserted, with tender concern seeks the deserter, and most graciously begs **us** to return to Him again. Mankind had gone away from infinite Goodness Itself, and had fallen into infinite depths of evil; but that very same infinite Goodness, having paid an infinite price for our redemption, rescues us from the infinite depths of evil.

O does not this infinite mercy exceed the highest thought of our finite human minds? Christ has brought to our poor human nature a greater glory than it lost by Adam's sin. In Christ we receive more than we lost in Adam. Where sin had abounded, divine grace has much more abounded [ROM 5.20]. In Adam we had lost primal innocence, but in Christ we have received a full and completed righteousness [ROM 5.18]. We may justly regard the power of God as wonderful ... yet more wonderful still is His grace – although in one sense they are equally wonderful, because both are infinite ... God reveals Himself above all as the LORD Who saves (JESUS). Rightly may we may admire the wondrous power of God in creation ... but still more may we admire the marvels of His grace in redemption – although both creation and redemption alike manifest His infinite power. It was a great thing to create man in the first place, when, as yet not existing, he could deserve neither good nor ill at God's hands – but to redeem man, when he justly merited condemnation ... and to take upon Himself the punishment due for man's transgression ... that seems a still greater thing. It is truly wonderful when we consider how God has formed us in our flesh and our bones – but it is still more wonderful to think how He was willing to become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone [EPH 5.30].

Therefore, on this *Feast of the Nativity*, give thanks to God Who created you, when as yet you had no being ... Who redeemed you, when through sin you were under eternal condemnation ... and Who has prepared for you joys unspeakable and full of glory, as you by faith cling to your Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the + SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]