

Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

“Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem”

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It's the wonderful time of the year. And if the Holiday season is the most wonderful time of the year, then this must be the most wonderful day of the year. It is Christmas, the day that our entire season of Advent has been leading up to; the day every Evensong has fixed its gaze upon.

Even to the pagan culture, its joys flow over, its wonders. Though few may go to Church on this day, though few may even believe in the Incarnation of the Word, the *word's being made flesh* in Jesus of Bethlehem, they cannot help but participate in this day's pleasures. Even they look upon their decorated trees with fondness, and open their presents with great eagerness. Even they buy nice wine, and join with good friends and fond family. Even they prepare a great feast.

Even in the eyes of all the nations, the heathen to whom the word came, but they received him not as their own; even they cannot withhold themselves from celebrating on this most joyous of occasions.

How much more should we celebrate?

For what they celebrate in ignorance, we celebrate in knowledge, and commemorate in wisdom.

How much more should we celebrate?

For they look upon the Christmas tree with fondness, but we know it is because it is a symbol of the tree of our death now made the tree of life, *'the apple tree' planted by rivers*

of water in the word made flesh.

They open their presents with great eagerness, but we know that such gifts are but a token of that perfect gift, *the word made flesh*, given by God the Father to his beloved children.

Even they buy nice wine, and join with good friends and fond family, but we know that such wine is but a sign of that wine which, poured out from this child, makes good friends of enemies, and fond family or foreigners; that overcomes all enmity and knits the hearts of all mankind in one within *the word made flesh*.

They prepare a great feast, but we know that all our life now has become a feast upon *the word made flesh* week to week, in the holiness of his Supper, day to day, in the grace of his faith.

How much more should we celebrate?

Still, there is something strange about Christmas. If it is a time of such celebration, such joy, why does Christmas occur if not on, at least near, the winter solstice; the darkest night of the year.

I am sure you have heard some sophisticated hack talk about this before. How Christmas was a co-opting of some pre-existing pagan Winter celebration, or how it was invented to hide the feast of the Sol Invictus, where the sun would slowly gain power against the night. This is nonsense.

Christmas occurs so near the winter solstice because Christ comes into the most profound darkness of our lives, to the longest stretches of the night of our existence.

To many of you, this is not the most wonderful time of the year. To many of you, this may not be a Merry Christmas, a Happy Holiday, a Happy New Year, a Happy Few Years, a Happy adulthood, a happy life.

To many, even to most of you, and if we were honest, all of us, might look

within, and what do we see? A darkness writhing. A profound darkness, which *neither flesh nor blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man* can overcome.

Look deeper into that darkness and you will see the darkness looking back into you: your passions, your envies, your dissatisfactions, your secret sins, your pet desires, your faithlessness, your impiety, your impurity, your shame, your guilt. Look deeper into that darkness. What do you see? The darkest night of the year.

Our Lord chose to be born in a manger. He chose to be surrounded by dumb animals. He chose to be fed by a peasant girl, Mary. He chose to be raised by a simple carpenter.

He chose to be tempted in the wilds for forty days. He chose to wander the land in his life as a hated and suspected itinerant, some viewing him here as a madman, some there as a dangerous meddler. He chose to give himself over unto death. He chose death, *even death upon the cross*.

Do you not see why Christmas occurs during the darkest day of the year? It is because our Lord chooses to be born into the heart of all human darkness. He chooses to be born into the darkness of your heart; even into the heart of your darkness.

For this reason, it is written of you, who are overcome in darkness and gloom, in misery and sadness: *Break forth in joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem.*

Our Lord chooses your darkness, for *'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it.'*

For what use is a light if it be placed beneath a basket? Rather it must be placed into the height of night, the depth of darkness, that there it might shine and bring light to the world.

'In him was life; and the life was the light

of men.' Your life is one of
darkness? *'Rejoice therefore.'* *'For in*
him was the light of men.' *'And your darkness shall not overcome it.'*

How much more then
should we celebrate?

Enough talk. No one appreciates a long sermon on the Christ Mass, on the Feast
of the Nativity. It is, after all a mass, so let us bring out the sacred wine *which*
makes glad the hearts of men.

It is, after all, a
feast, so bring forth the *bread of life, for*
whosoever eats of this bread will live forever.

'Rejoice and be glad forevermore. And
again, I say rejoice.'

For on this darkest of all days, *'the*
Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory
of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

+To him alone be all majesty, honor, and dominion, now, and forevermore.
AMEN.+

Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6;
John 1:1-14.