

Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

'In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets, but in these last days, He has spoken by His Son.'

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There is something a little unsettling about God becoming flesh in the Christ child. Though we love our nativity sets, and sing of the infant Jesus, one has to ask, and indeed many have asked, *why?*

Particularly, 'why did God become man?' A question theologians have asked for centuries.

If one thinks a little about it, mankind was all quite content with worshiping an invisible God far far away. The Jews still do, as do the Muslims, and, arguably, the Hindus. Its easy to believe in the far away God, who, though far away, still cares enough about us to hear our prayers, and, on occasion, answer them; to peer our way during times of great injustice, and bring good order to the world. This is a God you do not need to see when you do not want to, but you can speak to when you please. We were quite content with this order of things.

Yet God does not seem content with this. Rather, in His infinite freedom, on this day, He chose to be born of the Virgin Mary. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*

And His dwelling among us would prove to be little more than an inconvenience.

For this child, whom we today adore, would grow up. And being *the word made flesh*, He would speak. And He would not speak the kinds of things men like to hear, but that God wishes us to know.

These inconvenient words would eventually become an annoyance. And that

annoyance, eventually a nuisance, and that nuisance, a threat.

I am not speaking here hypothetically. The child we celebrate today, we will nail upon a cross in a few months. We will kill him.

We like the God that is far away. We do not like God face to face, for something about that very idea is unsettling, dreadful, even terrifying. Even the Israelites in Sinai refused to face God upon the mountain as they left Egypt. Rather, they sent Moses alone to treat with the Lord of Hosts.

If God had something to say, why not just send another prophet? Prophets are just men after all, so we feel we can take them or leave them as we like, just as all the prophets of the Old Testament were taken, then left.

But why this direct confrontation between sinful mankind, and the perfect Godhead?

All of a sudden, the theological question of 'why did God become man' sounds less like a philosophical debate among scholars, but an accusation among aggrieved men. It is the equivalent of saying to God 'why are you here?' Or worse, 'who invited you?'

But today is Christmas, and whether or not anyone invited Jesus into our lives, yet He is here.

Many may say they do not believe in Jesus. This is like saying one does not believe in Canada. Whether you believe in it or not doesn't matter. He is a fact, and we must deal with it.

But let us step back. It is Christmas, the day in which even Scrooge is given a chance, and the Grinch's heart grows three sizes. Instead of taking offense at our Lord in the flesh, let us invite Him into the stable, and, in our suspicion, ask Him, 'why are you here?' 'Why did God become man?'

'*God is love.*' He says. And love cannot always remain at a distance. The lover must be joined to the beloved. Why should we love a God that always remains far off, like a husband who never comes home? But God is not such a husband. He has come home, to *a dwelling place with men, to his temple, and He speaks of the temple of His flesh.*

'God is king.' He says. And a king must inherit His kingdom. In the arms of Mary lies not merely a child, nor merely God in the form of a child, but a ruler, even the ruler of all creation. He has come to reclaim what is His. *Repent and believe the Gospel, for the kingdom of God is at hand.*

'God is good.' He says. But how can God be good when He is infinite, unknowable, perfect? What does it mean for God to be giving and charitable when everything to him is free? What does it mean for God to be forgiving when He never suffers wrong? What does it mean for God to be righteous when He cannot be tempted, since He has no desires that He does not fulfill in Himself?

For God to be good, He must be made man, that He might live out the life of man as man was meant to be. As man He will heal the sick, and be mocked. As man, He will be wronged, yet not revenge. As man he will forgive, yet be unforgiven. As man, He will suffer by our hands, to pour out the blood demanded of Adam and Cain and all their children for our own sake. He will become a sacrifice. As man, He will be afraid, yet not flee. As man, He will pay what is owed. As man, He will be good, for we men have gone so terribly wrong. And all these things *at a price.*

For this reason, God becomes man, to fulfill the Law that we cannot approach.

And for what purpose?

To prove that He is good, and that He is good to us?

Not only. But to prove that He is our king, who fights for His people.

Not only. But to prove that He is love, and that by His becoming a child of man, *he has given the right to all who believe in Him to become children of God.* [This, is our joy, born of water and the Word.] We say, 'Merry Christmas.' It is merry indeed, *O daughters of Zion.*

But the prophet, rather than saying 'Merry Christmas,' speaks a little more verbosely:

'Break forth together into singing,

you

*waste places of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people;*

*he
has redeemed Jerusalem.*

The Lord has bared his holy arm

*before
the eyes of all the nations,*

and all the ends of the earth shall see

*the
salvation of our God.'*

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