

Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

“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” (Isa 52:10).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Do you notice anything missing from our readings this morning?

On this Christmas Day when we celebrate our Lord’s birth,

do you notice what is NOT present?

Actually, there are a number of things that are not present:

There is no cooing infant, no gentle Mary, no happy ass or furry oxen -

There is absolutely none of the stuff of lullabies or Hallmark Cards;

none of the warm, fuzzy ingredients of table-top crèches...

Rather, on this day when the world seeks to fabricate a peace of its own, craving trivial sentimentality and the warm glow of a self-contrived respite from the curse of this fallen world,

the Church has chosen wisely and selected readings that do nothing to support such a vain and foolish delusion.

On the contrary, beginning with our Psalm this morning,

we are actually told that this child who is born this day is in fact our God and King who is given possession of the world (Psa 2:6-8).

“The ends of the earth are His” (Psa 2:8) declares the Psalm.

The LORD has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations (Isa 52:10).

This Jesus who is born in flesh is the radiance of the glory of God (Heb 1:3).

He upholds the universe by the word of His power (Heb 1:3),

and He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, superior even to the angels (Heb 1:3-4).

He IS the Son of God, begotten of the Father (Heb 1:5) - through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3) -

God of God, the Word made flesh who dwelt among us as the revelation of God’s glory, the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

And yet, our acknowledgement has somehow come down to a plate of cookies, some brightly colored lights,

and a progressively bizarre parade of inflatable figures that make a mockery of this startling and significant revelation, or at the very least, divert our attention away from it.

“Why do the nations go on this way?

Why do the peoples carry on with such vain nonsense” (Psa 2:1)?

As our Psalm confesses, the kings and rulers of this world
have literally rejected Christ -

from Herod and Pilate to the
princes of our own day,

the rich and the powerful have set
themselves against the Lord and His Anointed.

What's worse, we have ALL separated ourselves from the LORD.

We have all "cast away their cords
from us," trivializing and marginalizing our God and King by our insistence on
being god and king for ourselves.

At best, we fabricate a gentle caricature of God in the
flesh,

nodding along and "loving the baby Jesus"
as long as He remains safely and harmlessly confined to our Christmas cards
where He sleeps contentedly next to that happy donkey.

And yet, on this day when Jesus *seems* to abide conveniently in the box with the
rest of the mail;

on this day when the children come
running in their jammies to open their presents;

on this day when inflatable Santas
loom over yards and rooftops like the hollow idols they are,

God is deadly
serious.

The Scriptures we hear this morning and the confession we make
are indeed a matter of life and death.

And it is long past time the Church
began taking our God and His Christ seriously!

So perhaps we might try this:

How about, the next time you look
at your Christmas cards... the next time you gaze upon this sweet little baby
Jesus in His crib,

picture yourself pressing a crown
of thorns down around His brow until the blood flows freely into His eyes.

Stake His little hands and feet to a cross of wood.

Strip Him naked and leave Him to
die -

For that is, after
all, what our sin has brought upon Him...

Our failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all
things;

our ceaseless desire to burst the
bonds and cast away the order that God has provided for our lives;

our endless insistence on being
king for ourselves has brought our God down from heaven to die.

Which is why we have *not* gathered here this morning simply
to remember a baby in a manger,

but to ponder this miracle of God's
grace -

this sobering revelation of God
rendering Himself in mortal flesh and blood to die on the cross in order to
redeem His creation and reconcile us to Himself.

This God of God who reigns and rules in absolute power over
all things could have, perhaps SHOULD have, come with a rod of iron to dash us
in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa 2:9):

"He who sits in the heavens laughs,"
proclaims our Psalm,

“the Lord holds them
in derision.

And He will speak to them in his
wrath, and terrify them in his fury... (Psa 2:4-5).

And yet He has not... not yet.

Rather, even while we were still
sinners;

even though we continue striving
against the bonds of His love, God has sent His Son for us (Rom 5:8) in infant
flesh and blood to take our place under the derision and fury we have deserved,
and to suffer the punishment for
our sin so that we could be reconciled to Him who reigns in Zion.

THAT, dear Christians, is what WE marvel at this Christmas morning
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that God has come in *humility*
so that we who have marginalized and trivialized and despised our God and His
Christ could actually turn to Him for His forgiveness -

that on this day when our Lord continues
to come for us in flesh and blood, we may rejoice with trembling and approach
Him on bowed knee to kiss the Son -

that as we take our places in this
intimate Communion so freely offered, He pours out His forgiveness and gives us
peace.

So let us greet Him today whose coming we have prepared for
this Advent season -

Let us come with the prayer, “Lord,
have mercy” to receive His forgiveness.

Let us come with the song of
Hosanna to receive the salvation He brings.

Let us come with trembling -

“Let all mortal flesh keep silence and
with fear and trembling stand” (LSB 621)...

For the Lord HAS comforted His people.

All the ends of the earth HAVE seen
the salvation of God (Isa 52:10)...

And blessed *are*
you who take refuge in Him (Psa 2:12) -

In the Name of
Jesus. Amen.

Preached by Pastor Holowach

*Sermon Texts: Psalm 2;
Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-14*