

Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity

'And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.'

+INJ+

O People who have walked in darkness, what now is happening in the stable? And what does the virgin hold to her breast?

As shepherds dwelling among beasts, you were once far off, dwelling among the wild animals, as in the wilderness, tempted by the weakness of your will; as astrologers in distant lands, you were lost in ignorance, seeking wisdom from that which does not speak, and truth from that which does not know.

As a lamb among wolves, you waited only to be devoured, knowing not the path to the bliss of heaven, where joy rings forever, but only the certainty of Sheol, where none shall give you praise.

Planted in the presence of the Lord in the Garden, you desired what was not to be sought. And for this reason you were cast out of your ancient home, a paradise upon the earth, to seek in the wilderness what ought not be desired.

In waterless places, you wandered, working the dust by the sweat of your brow, that you may eat in the same way as your father the devil. For as he was cursed to crawl over the earth, you were cursed to be buried beneath it. Your first home, one looked up to the light of the sun; your second, the darkness of unbreathing decay, and this alone.

The woman too would know only pain, and even pain in her children, for her love of what she has created, she has created only for the grave; for even the giving of life is vanity, and living life nothing but striving after the wind, for indeed nothing changes, and no work of man can bring about something new under the sun. All is vanity; even the mother who nurses mutters: all is vanity.

All who wander are lost, and those who are lost find no rest. What then comes of the restless; and what fate for the homeless? *Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*, dust even driven by the wind, to be tossed about this way and that *as the wind pleases* forever.

The Almighty looks down from His throne, and bears His teeth. The Father looks upon the decay of His handiwork, the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve; the Lord does not bear their plight. Will His love allow Him to consign His creation to the ashes, or their souls to *the tormentors*? Or will His righteousness *render justice against all ungodliness*? Will He, then, descend to us? Or does the God of Heaven turn away in disgust?

The Lord knits His brow from His see; the angelic host look on in silence.

Gazing down upon the lost wreck of humanity, He speaks, even as He only spoke to our first parents, saying: *'Adam, where are you?'*

Overcome by compassion, and greatly desiring to visit His last creation, He rises from His throne. The angels, rejoicing greatly, shake the sea, once still as crystal, for the salvation of their master, Adam, is at hand.

Shouts of praises cry out from the Host, for the Lord of Glory draws near, near to the one sheep, for whose sake the Good Shepherd shall leave the ninety-nine, that not one of those given to His hand may be lost.

He descends, down to His knees, that He might find the fallen coin, that that which bears His image may be recovered with great joy.

He sinks into the earth, to buy with His blood the land in which that treasure has been buried again and again since the death of Abel; that by His hand He might dig it up out of its grave.

He leaves behind His glorious hall, that having given up all, He might gain the pearl of great price, hidden within the gripping prison of sin and death, embedded deep within the sea of the Leviathan.

Seek Him, therefore, while the Lord is near, dear Christian. As a shepherd in the wild, forsake land of wandering; or a conjuror among the heathen; abandon the ignorance of idols. For a child is born in Bethlehem, *a great light to those lost in darkness*.

In swaddling clothes will you find Him, the God of Sabaoth, who looks upon the face of the daughter of Eve; for in her He sees her deceived mother.

The guile of the Liar He has come to abolish; the scale of the serpent by the sword of His mouth He shall pierce.

'For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult

and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned as fuel for the fire.'

'For the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this.'

+INJ+

Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2 :11-14; Luke 2 :1-14.