

# Third Vespers of Advent

Bulletin

Audio

*'Truly, you are a God who hides himself.'*

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Strive, do we now, for the vision of God, to see that which is the source and end of all things, the fulfillment of all our desires, and our resting place.

For there is no place on Earth that we shall call paradise. Godless men have attempted, thousand years upon a thousand more, to forge such a worldly heaven, but hell always cools from the anvil, and even then, only after many flashing blows.

Who are we, that we might believe that our reason or imagination might bring about happiness in this realm of dread? Our reasoning is broken, and our imaginings all in vain, for vanity corrupts all that defines our mortal estate, and even our highest faculties are mortal.

Like Nebuchadnezzar, we look upon our works, and glory, yet at the next moment, before a man in rags, we graze in the field like a wild beast, not because we have lost our senses, but because we had never found them. The king of Babylon had not been put under a spell, but been woken from one, then to realize he is not a ruler at all, but a beast, even as the Psalmist writes, *'I am not a man, but a worm.'* *'All who see me mock me. They make mouths at me; they wag their heads.'* *'For I am scorned by all mankind, and despised by the people.'*

Our striving then, is in vain. And yet, are we not commanded, *seek ye first the kingdom of heaven?* If we are so commanded, then it must be possible for us to act, to work, to fulfill.

It must be possible for us, by our God-given faith and strength to climb Jacob's

ladder, and raise our eyes to the wheel within the wheel. Yet *we shall awake, and know it not; and our tongue shall cleave to the roof of our mouth, though we force our bellies to eat of food we dare not.*

*For we shall be bound, O Sons of Man, and be made to bear the years of iniquity.*

Why labor, if we will not gain? Why ask, if we ask the impossible?

It is the Lord Himself who tells us that *none hath ever seen God*; and again St. John who writes, *'No man hath seen God at any time; save the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'*

Like Moses, we are not permitted to see the Lord of Our Salvation, as He faces us, but only by what He leaves behind. *What must we do, then, to inherit eternal life? If eternal life is to behold Him who is the Truth, and yet, God, in truth, is a God that hides Himself?*

Should we, who live every day in our sinfulness, simply gaze upon the Lord of Glory in this blood-stained world when our first Father Adam was hidden from Him in the Garden of Paradise by nothing but the bite of an apple?

Such is worse than vanity. It is nothing but pride.

*For no man hath ever seen God, save the only begotten Son.* So none may inherit paradise, save the Second of the Trinity. So none may be a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, save the Temple of Christ's body itself.

*Who, then, shall deliver us from our body of death?*

So far, we have spoken truthfully. Heaven is the vision of God, yet none may see God, save the Son. Heaven is in the Church, yet none may make up the Church, save Jesus. Then what of us?

Christmas Day soon approaches, when we pray:

*Shower, O heavens, from above,  
and let the clouds rain down righteousness;  
let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit;  
let the earth cause them both to sprout;  
I the Lord have created it.*

For the grace of God, which is Christ shall now wet the earth out of which Adam our Father was first drawn. And in Mary's womb shall that ground open and drink in the Lord's mercy, that human flesh might be made His own.

No man may see God, but man may see man. *No man may touch God, but let us touch only the hem of His garment, and we shall be made whole.*

For the Apostle urges us: *'You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him'*

Behold how the Christ offers His body to enter into the fire of the Lord's glory, even as a prince enters his own throne room. Only enter into this body and flesh *by his death*, that we too may be united to the Godhead bodily.

For He is the very ark of Noah which will ascend Mount Ararat, and so receive the dove of peace and the olive branch of light and life and joy. Enter then, into this ark, all you faithful, that in Him, we may all know the one and only paradise, which is found only in the Son Himself, to be God and man made one, in the one who is God and paradise Himself, for in Christ, and Christ alone, is God and humanity truly reconciled, and eternally at peace.

Enter, then, this ark. That even as the world completed its course in seven days, to be finished by baptism on the eighth, so too we might we be presented before the Father within the flesh of Jesus and the flood of His blood, *eight souls in all.*

Come kneel before the Christ-child as He is born unto us, that by His obedience, we may be born unto God. *For the Lord did not say 'Seek me in vain.'*

For in this Child born of Mary, *all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him he reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* For He, alone, is paradise.

Greet the child, and repent of your despair. Rather, rejoice, for the day of our longing Babylon, and the years of our exile in Sinai have come to an end. Now, will our tongues say to the Lord:

*'You have turned my mourning into dancing.'*

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*Preached by Pastor Fields*

*Meditation Texts: Isaiah 45:8, 15-19; Colossians 1:15-23.*