

I assume, given the day, that you had to wrestle with coming to worship this morning and you, clearly, concluded that you wanted to be here. What do you expect to happen this morning? I have been recently convicted of my lack of expectation of God's presence among us when we gather. Christmas has become something to dote on, as if the memorial of the moment when the eternal Son of God deposed Himself to the inhibition of infancy needed my preparation to make it wonderful. I am trite, frankly. Maybe because a mind like mine, constantly scattered from the tiniest things, both materially insignificant and immaterially confusing, to the massive things can overwhelm me to the point of petrification. Or, simply because cosmic upheaval is an unfathomable mystery. But just sitting and contemplating what this event, which we commemorate and celebrate this day, really means was stunningly difficult this year.

Therefore, I want to ask you to contemplate the Incarnation with me this morning. Maybe the Spirit of God will impress upon our hearts and minds the import of this event.

Let us slow down and consider: Who is this Jesus? Is Christmas like celebrating my good buddy's birthday? Why do I get presents? No. It is not Jesus' birthday. This analogy is much too slight an audacious claim; not audacious because it is too great...but because it is too small. The Spirit gives us some insight through Paul's letter to the Colossian church:

Colossians 1:15-23

He is the image of God. The Icon. All that God is and does, the Son is and does and makes seen. He, then, is infinite AND viewable. Contemplate that for a moment. You cannot sound such depths, but let's swim as deeply as we can before our limited thoughts must come up for air. The Son of God is boundless, without edges. If I could speed through the silent soundings of space, I know that the Universe, as immense as it is, still has edges. Yet, even its limited

vastness cannot be fathomed by us, who can barely see across the street. Our limits are clear, though we often deny them. Trillions of galaxies. Trillions! I can't even fathom what a trillion is, let alone a trillion galaxies, each made up of billions of stars. And each of those a diversity of stars of varying sizes and intensities powered by continuous atomic fusion trillions of times over. Stars whose density sometimes becomes so great they implode and explode into supernovas of such vast power that we have seen them in full daylight over distances so great that even light takes tens of thousands of years to travel. If I were to travel to the ends of this vast expanse, to reach the edges of the Universe, I would not reach the edge of the Son of God. He runs beyond the finite. These thoughts are too small, and yet in them are endless mysteries in the brushstrokes of the Son on the canvas of creation.

And He *rules* THAT. By sheer fiat sub-atomic particles appear from nowhere...and from nothing. At His word they snap-to and assemble into atoms. Molecules bond and arrange themselves into foundational elements, like a cosmic marching band at his whistle. With His song they dance, stretching and spinning, leaping and clashing in perfect poetry, weak forces and strong forces oscillate until every heavenly body burst forth in a wash of luminous splendor...at His word, who is the Son. Every molecule, every cell, every atom, every proton, every electron, is the echo of His voice. The space between them and the energy which keeps them from flying apart does so because he *is speaking*. You are wearing clothes consisting of the voice of God. You are sitting on a chair resonating with the voice of God. What is wrapped under that tree at home? The voice of God. You, yourself, are held together by God's aria, the harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit. Every atom awaits its cue in fervent expectation and at His word it dances. The Son is the firstborn over all, because He made all things.

And these are only the things we can see. He rules over the unseen, invisible things, the things which we often neglect and in our arrogance deny, but He rules the powers behind the powers. He rules the energies underneath the energy because they were all made by him. No spirit is outside His control, not even man's. He waits for nobody and nothing to execute His will, because He is over them all. This One rules over all things and by his word they consist. Should he will it, they would cease...and one day He will speak the word.

He maintains EVERYTHING. All things consist, and are composed, because He alone wills it to be. God did not die on the cross, for if He did the very cross on which Christ hung would have vaporized into non-existence, the earth popped like a bubble into nothingness, the Universe come undone into the void. No, in the mystery of the cross, God did not die, but the God-Man did, while continuing to maintain, to hold together, to preserve all things, for all things consist through Him. The Son is not passive in this world, but always and ever active in all things. Your heart beats and neurons fire and thoughts are wandering now because HE. He wills. He speaks. The only thing keeping you from flying apart into the vastness of the spaces between the particles is the Son of God. He is *involved*. He is *near*. He is not dispassionate or distant. Your very next breath is evidence of His mercy and His affection for you. And that breath is, too. And that one. Do you think Him harsh? He is upholding you right now, though he does not need to. He *wants* to. He *wills* to. He *delights* to. His mercies towards your ever-darkened thoughts has been renewed this morning.

And all things were made for Him. He is the reason creation was created. He is the goal of all that has being. This story of creation, from the first explosive sound, is moved along as His

Word created the very soundwaves on which His voice would travel, generating particles from nothing and drawing them together in the perfect harmony of his song, all for the glory of the Son who glorifies the Father by the very breath of God. The unique one. Uncreated. Infinite. Self-existent. Who does not have life, but IS life. Every life made and maintained through Him who holds all things together and for whom it was all made. There is no more important figure, seen or unseen. There is no greater power, seen or unseen. There is no higher purpose, seen or unseen, than the one eternal God: Father, Son, and Spirit.

The Son is the Head of the church. Its commander. Its thinker. Its planner and purpose-maker. He is its wisdom and proclaimer, its lord of all sight and sound. The church does not see. The Son sees and explains to her. The Church does not hear. The Son hears and interprets to her. The Church does not speak of its own accord, but only what the Head proclaims. He is preeminent over all things. Incredibly, because He is infinite, even over those who die, for He knows death intimately, from experience, having slain it from the inside.

It was deemed good by God, from eternity, for all this fullness of infinite deity to inhabit the infant son of Nazareth. All the power of infinity birthed between the knees of an unwed teenager in the garage. Why? Why this way? Why did this omnipotent song enter the rave? Why this audacious move by the One who spoke all things...ALL THINGS...into being and in whom all things...ALL THINGS...consist and are held together?

To reconcile those things back to His Father. To repair and to restore the harmony which we brought to cacophony in our arrogant dissonance to Him. To cast the shadow of mercy upon the walls of the Universe and declare the glory of the Maker through the most humiliating act of power through weakness. Making peace through the blood of His cross.

Through the eternal Son of God's cross, by the God-Man's bleeding death, He purchased peace. He reconciled Creation from the animosity of Man to the righteousness of the Holy God. Why the need for peace and reconciliation?

Because, we were God's enemies. We like to think of ourselves as neutral observers, impatient children, or ignorant learners with flawed but good intentions, but never as *enemies*. I mean, we were *passively* lost, but not *actively* evil. But God reveals Humanity as terrorists of Creation, wreaking acts of suicidal warfare upon God's handiwork because we hate God and want to hurt and destroy Him and all that He loves. *We suppressed the truth in unrighteousness*. The act of suppression is an active deed, not a passive one. It is a violent work of stifling, silencing, and deception, both self-centered and other-directed. We lie to ourselves and to each other because we hated the truth. We despised God's rule and sovereignty and rights and demanded that He consider us first, love us best, and grant to us all delights *on our terms and according to our wisdom*. We deemed it wrong that He would claim such sovereign power over our will, over our loves, over our bodies, and over our treasures. He deemed it right to send the Son to redeem betraying ingrates. How did we suppress the truth of God's eternal power and sovereignty and rights? In unrighteousness. That is, injustice. We unleashed injustice upon His world in an effort to subjugate Him and His creation to the caliphate of ME. So God "handed us over" to this injustice, both within us and without us, and we suffer the slings and arrows of an enemy too weak to damage God

and too arrogant to put down these weapons, thus they are used against us in this battle, exacerbating our suffering with the very weapons which we brandished. We are both perpetrators of great evil and also victims of great evil. But, God was never bruised by our petulance. It is we who are black and blue...and dead. Christmas means that we are so bad, so perverse, so suppressive, and so dead, that the Eternal Son of God *had to come* and rescue us through the blood of His cross!

And the Eternal Son did...He adventured - 'unto us this Son is given'...and we executed the Author of Life because we didn't want to be ruled. Alienated from God in our hatred, hostile towards God in our mind, we crucified the Song of Life. But He, the Eternal Creative Word, deemed it good to die like a man, so that through His fleshly death He might hand us over to the Father as holy, unblemished, and blameless. Christmas means that God loves you so greatly that the Eternal Son of God *did come and die in our place!*

Whatever else can be asked of God, as to why He does things like this or why He allows sin and suffering and sorrow into this Universe which He spoke, one cannot claim that He is indifferent or uninvolved because He entered into this world to experience it, to absorb it, to bear it up *for us*. What Dorothy Sayers calls, "taking His own medicine" when she wrote:

"For whatever reason, God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—he [God] had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with his creation, he has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He has himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial

irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When he was a man, he played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace, and thought it was worthwhile.” - *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*

This is what the Incarnation of the Son of God means. This is its significance. Eternal Son of God, Divine Word, Maker of the heavens and the earth and all that is contained in the realms of existence save Himself, the Sustainer of all things, upholding them by the power of His word, very God of very God...condescended to enter it Himself to reconcile enemies who would betray Him, seek to manipulate and use Him, and finally murder Him, very man of very man. He came to war against injustice, but He did not loose the dogs, but was rather born with them and consumed by them. Eternity birthed in the dung of the animal's room, with those dogs, and not with the war-cry of the Lion, but with the whimper of the child foretelling the bleating of the lamb. The Eternal One so entered into the totality of our suffering, into our complete mess, into the entirety of our toil and turmoil as to soak up the very nature of our weakness, our finitude, our sorrows and sufferings in order to reconcile us *completely*. His humility went all the way down to the dregs of dependence, the futile thrashing of a newborn powerless to feed, warm, or clean himself. The one who moves stars by His word willed himself to be unable to move his thumb into his mouth. This same humble will would one day restrain the very fists which poured the seas from unleashing Hell on earth when He was being unjustly tortured.

What child is this? He is the keeper of the stars, the heart-knower, and the one who turns the will of man like a channel moves the flow of the river. He is the sovereign power upholding all that exists and He came to die like a man to reconcile us by taking upon Himself the very

blood He designed. This one? This one we remember with awe. This one we celebrate with wonder. This one we receive with joy, for if He has gone to such great lengths to reconcile us to Himself, how far will He go to hold onto us, if we continue to entrust ourselves to Him who is Grace personified, the God-Man who died that sinners, failures, and enemies might be declared children of God. This? This is the Christ! Behold your King!