

## ***“In Him was Life”***

“Glory to God in the highest” – and peace to you, on whom His favor rests. Amen.

Christmas time is certainly a time of great marvel – but one of the things that astonishes me, is how people can hear the “good news of great joy that will be for all people” on Christmas – and then not come to church the rest of the year.

How marvelous is this “good news” breathed into our ears! “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” “Son of the Father, now in flesh appearing, O come let us adore Him ... Christ the Lord.” “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” All this “good news” – and yet, after today, so many take the rest of the year off. How can this be?

Is it because Christmas has become a family tradition, or an obligation? Is Christmas only a children’s pageant? Do people simply come to sing the great Christmas hymns – and if so, do they even listen to what they are singing?

OR, is it because the Christmas Gospel is a mystery? That’s part of it – not just FOR THEM – but for us. The “good news” we keep hearing about is hidden. It is hidden from our reason. It is hidden from our sight. But the mystery of the Christmas Gospel has been revealed.

We have heard this “good new” which has come from heaven to earth – from God to you. The “Word,” the Son of God, who “became flesh” is laid in a manger for all eyes to see. And yet the mystery remains – for that very One who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger – comes and dwells with you today.

The “mystery of the Incarnation” did not begin at the birth, or even the conception of Jesus. For generations the Lord had promised to send His Redeemer, our Savior – and the promise of that “good news of great joy” was met with a healthy dose of expectation.

So when the time came for the promise to be fulfilled – it didn't come off as many had expected. God's work was hidden to the world – and yet, at the same time – revealed to those with ears to hear.

There were, no doubt, many who watched Mary's belly grow over the past few months, and looked down their noses in shame on this young girl. But to Joseph and Mary, the Lord has revealed that this Child is Immanuel (God with us) – and that His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

The Bethlehem innkeepers probably shook their heads, wondering why this young couple didn't plan ahead. But to shepherds it was made known that they would find their Savior "lying in a manger."

Any passer-by who would have peeked into the manger, would have commented on the cute little baby – but then, all babies are cute. But to magi from the east – who later came to the house in Bethlehem where the holy family was now staying – the Lord had guided them to this newborn King.

The mystery that God the Father had promised – and was revealing – is that His Son who was laid in the wooden manger – would be laid upon the wood of the cross – as the sacrifice for all sin – for the redemption, and salvation of the world. This is the mystery which even now – the Lord is making known to you.

So the Lord makes known His mystery. He takes that which is hidden and brings it to light. But as St. John says – "though the world was made through Him, the world did not know Him" – and, "His own did not receive Him." In other words, the mystery remains a mystery – we still cannot wrap our minds around it – it is more than we can fully understand.

For instance, the Lord tells us that this little Baby lying in a manger – has made all things in heaven and on earth. How can THAT be? That's incomprehensible to us.

And yet, we sing with the psalmist, concerning this Child born of Mary – "The deep places of the earth are in His hand; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hand formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our maker."

It is not in human wisdom and understanding that we bow down before Jesus – but rather, it is in faith that we worship Him. We believe what He says – even if what He promises cannot be seen with our eyes or grasped with our understanding.

The great mystery revealed through your ears to the eyes of faith – that this little Child, born of Mary – IS LIFE. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

All too often we are looking for LIFE in all the wrong places. We leave this place behind because we think that our LIFE is out there somewhere in the world. And day after day we look – trying to live – but sin darkens our eyes, burdens our souls, weighs heavy on our hearts. The pursuit of LIFE “out there” in the darkened world – is never ending.

It is HERE that the Word of God is preached, and sung, week after week. HERE is the Light of Jesus Christ shining into your dark world. HERE is your LIFE, in this One, born of Mary.

In Him all your sin is forgiven. In Him you are holy in God’s sight. In Him your death is conquered. In Him, your body will be raised to life. In Him you have everlasting life, already now.

Like the shepherds of old, we have been enlightened with the “Good news” of the Savior born to us this day. It is God the Holy Spirit, drawing us HERE in faith – to worship “the Word” who was “made flesh” and who “dwells among us.” HERE is where we live – for Jesus is our LIFE. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.