

Sermon for the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord – Isaiah 9:2-7

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

The greatest miracle of Christmas is not Santa's magical sleigh ride, "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given ..." The greatest miracle is not the perfect gift under the Christmas tree, "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given ..." The greatest miracle is not the nostalgic dream of a white Christmas, "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given ..."

"And [He] was made man." The Creator of the universe took on man's body. He wrapped Himself in human flesh. How deep and profound a miracle this is! God became man! But what does it really mean?

The God created the entire universe now subjects Himself to be part of it. The Creator has united Himself to creation. The eternal and everlasting God who made the sun, moon, and stars must order his carpenter's work around the daylight He created. The Almighty God who made the waters and caused dry land to appear could splash about in the former and dig his toes into the latter, though He was known to walk on both. The All-Powerful Creator who made every beast of the forest and field, every bird of the air, and every tree and plant must rely upon them for daily bread. God who created man now becomes a man. The Virgin Mary whom He created, He is born of her. Her hands, which He made, hold His newborn Body. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who called the whole creation into existence by His Word, lies in a manger and lacks even the most simple speech to say His mother's name. God is united to His creation. One of our Christmas hymns says it most succinctly, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity! Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!"

The first sin against the law was when man wished to be God. The first proclamation of the Gospel followed immediately after when the Lord declared that the head of Satan would be crushed by the Offspring of the woman. Herein lies the miracle: men that wish to be God are saved by the God who wished to be made man. So the Lord redeems all of fallen mankind dwelling in darkness.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined." You've certainly heard the phrase, "to be left in the dark." It means that you or someone else knows nothing of what's been said or has occurred.

Adam wanted to leave God in the dark after he ate of the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve hid themselves among in the darkness of the forest hoping that God would not find them and what they had done. God said, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? ... What is this that you have done?" Adam and Eve's sin

was brought to light. But immediately, the Lord shined the light of righteousness. God sent the promise of mercy in the Seed of the woman.

King David wanted to leave God in the dark after his sin. He committed adultery with another man's wife. He covered his tracks almost flawlessly, even having the woman's husband killed in battle. The whole world was in the dark to his sins. But God was not. God said, "Why have you despised the Word of the Lord, to do what is evil in His sight?" David's sins were brought to light. But the Lord shined his light of righteousness and mercy through the prophet Nathaniel: "The Lord also has put away your sin, you shall not die."

Saint Peter, in the dark courtyard, denied his association with Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. He was ashamed to even know Jesus. As the rooster crowed, Peter remembered the words of the Lord, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." The Lord knew Peter's sin; He was not in the dark. But for Peter and all those who "dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined." Three days later, the angel declared, "... You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here ... Tell His disciples and Peter that He is going to Galilee. There you will see Him as He told you." The resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins was for Peter, who had even denied the Lord 3 times.

What about you? Have you also tried to hide in the darkness? Have you kept your boss and friends in the dark? Do you hide behind lies to your husband or wife or children? Is there something that you have done that you will take to the grave, rather than to tell? No longer dwell in darkness. Repent!

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light ... For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given." And this is no ordinary son; this is God in the flesh. "... And the government shall be upon His shoulder." You have the Son of God that takes the cross upon His shoulders, so that he might pay for your sin and win back all who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

The government is upon His shoulders and He reigns with all justice and righteousness. The Lord has every right to judge you severely, but He does not. Instead, He distributes His true righteousness to you from font, from pulpit, from altar. All because He has given His life as a sacrifice, taken your sins upon Himself, so that He makes you righteous. He was made "... to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given." And so this Christmas God gives you the greatest gift of all: Himself. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✂BJF✂