

“Imitating the Incarnation”

Introduction: This is the season, and this is the particular week, where the minds and activities of many are turned to what is among the greatest events of human history: the incarnation of The Son of God.

- Incarnation = to make flesh. This comes from John 1:14.
- The Son of God = not merely a son of God in being a created being, but the Son of God before anything was created. Something that this person, who comes in flesh and is known in that infleshment as Jesus Christ of Nazareth, was before time and history, eternally existing with God and as God.
- This is truly and amazing and mysterious event, and that which really happened to lay the groundwork for His subsequent life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension. This same Jesus who was received up into heaven will one day return to fully redeem both His people and the heavens and the earth, removing all corruption and sin from them.
- This event, that laid the groundwork and made possible all that would follow that Jesus would teach and do, is rightly remembered and celebrated as a great event. It is right to celebrate and say with the angelic host “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:14).
- So we celebrate, we sing, and rejoice in the Lord’s miracle of the virgin birth to bring His Son into the world to accomplish our redemption from sin and bring peace between us and God, and ultimately in redeemed humanity.
- But this is not only something to be admired, but to also for you and I to imitate (as we saw last week). What I find interesting is that the preaching of the NT mostly centers on the resurrection of Christ. Most of the passages speaking of the incarnation are merely passing references, yet there is one passage that speaks particularly about it, and its primary purpose is as a paradigm or example for our imitation. Philippians 2:5-7.

This passage a couple of important things about our Lord in regards to His incarnation:

1.) In His incarnation, He was in the form of God

- Existing in the form of God (Gk. morphy) = visual form or nature. Colossians 1:15 Hebrews 1:3. This is true both before His incarnation and in it.
- Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God – this is a difficult phrase, but as much as I can understand it conveys the fact that he did not consider being equal with God by way of glory and status and reputation something to hold onto and demand that others recognize. He was willing to give it up to accomplish the plan of salvation and to restore the world.

2.) In His incarnation, He made Himself of no reputation

- But (Gk. alla) – strong contrast; rather than demanding to be treated as God and equal, He did something that actually conveyed the opposite.
- Made Himself (reflexive). It was a choice He made.
- No reputation (Gk. Koneo) – Louw-Nida “to completely remove or eliminate elements of high status or rank by eliminating all privileges or prerogatives associated with such status or rank.

Illustration: a king who has status and rights who voluntarily dresses himself in the attire of a common citizen.

- More than a common citizen, he took on the form (Gk. morphy) of a bondsman. The phrase “My Servant” in Isaiah.
- This is one reason Jesus didn’t go around constantly saying He was God (though hinting at it, and the NT affirming). He took the role to not glorify Himself (in His humility), but to glorify God.
- He came in the likeness of men (Gk. homoioma). He fully took on human nature without losing His Divine.
- Psalms 113:6 the humility of God in beholding the things in the heaven and earth. How much more THIS!

- As we follow the verses, we follow Him down a staircase of humility, becoming obedient to the point of the most despised place of a condemned criminal who was crucified.

- We stand in awe, and admire and realize that as we consider the Son being born of Mary, an apparently helpless, pink, crying baby in the manger, He made a choice to be there. As we consider His humble life, as we consider His eventually being scorned and mocked and rejected and crucified, He did so by choice.
- This was the mind of Christ (v.5b): He surrendered His rights as the Son of God for God’s glory and the good of His people. This was love for God and His neighbor.

- It is this same mind (v.5a), this way of thinking, this mindset, which can enable us to live a life pleasing to the Lord.
- We live in a day and age in which “personal rights” and “personal choice” are exalted as among the highest of natural rights and among the highest virtues.
- Last week we considered “Imitating God”, and this is one of the primary ways that we do so.
- What does this look like? 2:3-4
 - o Negatively – not doing things out of selfish ambition or conceit
 - o Positively – Esteeming others better than himself; looking out for the interests of others.
- As we do so we experience the reality of Isaiah 57:15.

Conclusion: What does the incarnation teach us? It is a pattern/paradigm/example we are to imitate, not just in outward actions, but in the very way we think of ourselves in relations to others.

- How does this apply in your life? In relationship to your spouse? Children? Parents? Siblings? Those in the church? Fellow Christians? Workmates? Extended family? Neighbor? Boss? Employees?
- In this season, let us remember not only the great gift of Jesus Christ, but also His example of humility for us to imitate.