

Advent 4 2014

Over the past three weeks we have returned to the book of Genesis to lay a foundation for our celebration of Advent, (Titus 2:13) “**That glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**” We have considered:

- Man’s Greatest Need - A Savior to deliver him from the bondage of sin.
- God’s Promised Seed – We looked at the many prophecies foretelling Jesus as the *seed of the Woman and the promised seed of Abraham.*
- Christ’s Glorious Deed – Today we will see from Philippians 2 that *Jesus left the glory of heaven taking the form of a Servant to die for the sin of God’s people.*
- I would like to introduce this last point with a very personal illustration:

I have had the honor of officiating a great number of wedding services over the past 20 years. Of course the most memorable of all those services were the weddings of my own 3 children.

- I would have to say that the most difficult moment that I have ever faced in a wedding ceremony was NOT when I dropped the ring, or forgot to say “you may kiss your bride.”
- NO the most difficult moment in any ceremony was when my co-officiant said, “*Who gives Rachel to be married to Kookie??*” (my only daughter)
 - With all of my heart I wanted to pick her up and say **NOBODY!**
- For 25 years she lived her life in the bosom of our family’s love. She was the child who always found her security standing, sitting and laying right between Sharon and I.
 - This was my only daughter, not only was she leaving the family home she was leaving the state and moving to Texas.
 - I literally broke down during the rehearsal. (I did man up for the wedding)
- I had to tell myself, you are the one who teaches that the sacred bond of marital love supersedes the biological bonds of parent and child. I know the Scripture:

Matthew 19:4 (Jesus) answered, “**Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**”

- **BUT** this time it was my One and Only Daughter who was leaving.
- Why am I sharing this with you today?

As imperfect as my family is, it is the best example that I can think of to help you understand what took place when the Jesus left his home in glory and put on human flesh.

- For **ALL** of Eternity, the Lord Jesus abode in a perfect relationship of love along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

- My illustration breaks down because we didn't experience perfect unity in our home, BUT among Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfect oneness is part of THE essential nature of the Holy Trinity.

As we ponder Christ's Glorious Deed here are the few points I would like you to see:

1. Timeless Love - (In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God)
2. Temporary Humiliation - (Christ made himself nothing taking the form of a servant)
3. Total Dedication - (He became obedient to the point of death)

Point #1 TIMELESS LOVE:

In our sinful condition it is hard to imagine a union of love that isn't tainted in some way by selfishness, pride or lust.

But I would ask you to stretch your mind and try to consider the holy and blessed union of purest love that was eternally experienced by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the world began.

- The Apostle John gives us a glimpse into this divine oneness as he records the prayer of the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed.

John 17:24 **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**

- Jesus speaks of that TIMELESS LOVE, eternal affection that he enjoyed with the Father before the foundation of the world.
- Certainly this divine love goes far beyond our ability to comprehend. Right now we only see through a glass dimly.

In his Gospel, John moves the veil just enough for us to get a glimpse of this eternal love relationship.

John 1:1 **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.**

- *In the beginning was the Word* - Vs 14 tells us that this one called "The Word" is in fact the Lord Jesus.

"The Word was with God" - This phrase means far more than merely that the word existed in close proximity with God it provides a beautiful picture of two persons face to face one another engaged in sweet fellowship.

- This phrase actually denotes a person distinguished from God who is enjoying an intimate fellowship with God.

The next phrase "**And the Word WAS GOD**" informs us that this person who is distinguished from God, in an intimate relationship with God, is also God.

- Once again John pierces the veil of the eternal past so that we can get a glimpse at the beautiful love relationship between Father and Son.

It is this relationship that Jesus is describing when he says:

John 10:30, (Jesus said) **“I and the Father are one.”**

John 14: 10 **Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?**

For all of eternity the *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* dwelt together in a perfect and unbroken bond of love.

- When the Bible declares that **“*God is love*”** it is stating the essential characteristic and commonly shared nature of every member of the Trinity is love.

Take a minute and think about this:

- God had no need to create any other being in order to satisfy or express his love. The trinity itself was sufficient for the full expression of divine love.
- And it is OUT OF this perfect and loving union that Jesus comes forth when he takes on human flesh to dwell among men

JUST imagine stepping out of the glories and perfections of heaven and stepping into this sinful and corrupt world, leaving behind the Angelic host as they sing **“*Holy, Holy, Holy,*”** and being laid in a hard, cold feeding trough on a Bethlehem night.

- What would it be like for the eternal Son of God to leave the holy presence of the Father and come to dwell among corrupt and sinful men?

This illustration may help you understand:

A few years ago, I wanted to take my mother out for a special lunch for her birthday. At that time she really enjoyed eating crab legs. So Sharon did the research and found a place in Sanatoga that had a great price for Crab Legs every Sunday afternoon.

- We left church and went to what turned out to be a bar. Not only did they allow smoking, it seems that they strongly encouraged it in their dining room.
- When we opened the door the cloud of smoke that filled the room was denser than the worse fog I have ever seen. It literally took my breath away.
- No one in our family smokes, so what we have are four sets of pristine lungs walking into the most corrupt environment they have ever experienced.
- As we gasped for air (*dying breath*) we asked to be seated outside.

With that experience in mind think about: What was it like for the Holy One, the Lord of Glory to leave behind the sacred environs of heaven and dwell in the sinful pollution of violence, anger, lust, greed and corruption that we call home?

- We don't know any better, we have never experienced the beauty of holiness first hand. (Isaiah did and he said, **“*Woe is me!*”**)
- We are somewhat comfortable in a sinful environment. We are like that smoker, the one who enters an elevator full of people and HE is the only one who doesn't know that HE smells like an ash tray.

Philippians 2: 5 **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,**
6 **who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

- Jesus exists eternally in the “form of God.” (internal / external)
- He possesses all of the attributes of God
- He is self-existent, He is the “**I Am**” independent of all outside sources, dwelling in unapproachable light, perfectly holy, possessing unlimited power, boundless in his presence, as for knowledge he is perfectly omniscient, knowing, understanding and seeing all things and at his very essence he is love.

Point #2 - Temporary Humiliation

Allister Begg said: “No one ever started so high and humbled himself so low.”

Philippians 2:6 **who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,** 7 **but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

- His deity was not something that he was in jeopardy of losing.
- He did not consider the prerogatives of deity something that he must cling to.
- BUT he voluntarily chose not to exercise all of his divine attributes while he was dwelling in the form of a servant.

Paul writes: “*He made himself nothing*” (literally emptied himself) not by abandoning his divine attributes but rather by pouring his divinity into the vessel of a servant.

- He did not EXCHANGE deity for humanity. He retained his full deity and at the same time put on full humanity but
- He willingly limited some of his divine prerogatives and privileges for a season.

Paul tells the believers at Corinth that Christ set aside his eternal riches for our sake:

2Co 8:9 **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.**

- The very one who is the creator, the rightful Lord and Owner of all things became poor so that WE who were dwelling in spiritual poverty might be made rich.
- Through FAITH in Christ’s (life, death and resurrection) God has credited His true riches of righteousness to our bankrupt account.

Philippians 2:7 **(HE) made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant**

- Literally he became a SLAVE. He voluntarily took the lowest position known to human society, a slave.
- We see this in action when he wrapped himself in a towel and washed the feet of his disciples.

Philippians 2:8 **And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

- He was “found” in human form - an ordinary man, NOT like the pictures that Michael Angelo painted. (halo, flowing blond hair and piercing blue eyes)
- IN reality Christ did not look kingly, his appearance was not celestial or regal, as a matter of fact Isaiah describes his appearance as ordinary at best.

Isaiah 53: 2 **For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.**

- Put him in a police line up and say that one of these men is God in human flesh and NO ONE would pick him out. Finally:

Point #3 - Total Dedication????

Philippians 2:8B **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

- “He humbled himself” As if it were not enough that he left the glories of heaven and came to earth, As if it were not enough for him to go from SOVEREIGN to SLAVE,
- The full extent of the Lord’s humiliation is found in the manner of his death.
- Not only did the Author of Life submit to death, it was a death that was reserved for the worst of criminals.
- And he did this in obedience to the will of the Father.

It is my hope that you never look at the baby in the manger without knowing where he came from and where he was destined to go.

What do we take home from our devotional this morning?

For those who have never repented of their sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus:

- I pray that God opens your eyes to see your sinfulness in the light of his holiness.
- I pray that you are moved by his divine expression of love to entrust your entire being to his benevolent lordship.

For those who DO believe, those who have repented of their sins and received grace and forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Paul uses the voluntary humiliation of Jesus Christ to exhort believers to walk in humility and love with fellow believers.

Philippians 2:5 **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,**

- Willing to make yourself nothing.
- Willing to take on the form of a servant
- Willing to give your life up for your brother.

When Augustine was asked “what are the central principles of the Christian life” he answered: #1 - Humility, #2 - Humility, #3 - Humility.....

When the eyes of our heart are opened to the glories of God as they are revealed in the Lord Jesus, the vanity of our pride falls away in the light of his abundant beauty.