**God and man** 25/12/22

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7, John 1:1-14,

Text: John 1:1-14

Psalms: 27:1-5, 23old,49:1-10, 72old

Millions across our nation and around the world are celebrating Christmas, but how many know what they are celebrating? For many it is about Santa bringing gifts to children, while for others it about family and feasting. Thankfully, carols declaring, ‘Joy to the world, the Lord is come’ are still heard, and we hear about baby Jesus in a manger Bethlehem. But what does this mean for us today? Why, after two thousand years, are we still celebrating the birth of this baby in Bethlehem - if this is what we are celebrating?

The birth of Jesus is called the incarnation or the ‘in-fleshing’ of God. It is God becoming man, ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’ (1:14). Two thousand years ago the world saw grace and truth come in Jesus. It was a world desperate for grace and truth, just like the world today. Do pause and consider if you are in need of grace and truth in your life. I need grace because I am a sinner, and you are also a sinner in need of grace.

Let us look for a moment at the opening verses of John’s gospel as we try to understand the meaning of life, our life, in this world. We note four points: God made man- creation; Man makes gods- sin; God becomes man- the incarnation; Man becomes a child of God? -redemption. The last point has a question mark because this is conditional upon receiving Jesus Christ (1:12).

**1. God made man- creation**

Does anyone still believe that life began in a primeval pond millions or billions of years ago? The theory of evolution told us this lie, and further that we then descended from the monkeys or that monkeys are our cousins. Intelligent people accept that we are intelligent beings and that we have a soul. John tells that in the beginning, ‘All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made’ (1:3) - ‘Him’ being the ‘Word’ or Jesus. Yes, Jesus is the eternal Son of God who was with God in the beginning, as was God. ‘All things’ must include human beings.

The Bible tells us that God made us in his image; he did not make any other creature in his image. And God breathed into man the breath of life (Gen 2:7). The life that we have in us is from God, the very breath of God. Being made in the image of God we can relate to God; we were made to relate to God and to worship God. God walked in the garden and spoke with Adam, in the beginning.

We mentioned the theory of evolution that has been perpetrated for the last one hundred and fifty years. Charles Darwin came up with this idea knowing that it was contrary to the truth of the Bible. Calling his idea ‘science’ gave it authority and made teachers of the Bible question what they were reading; they started calling Genesis 1 myth rather than history, God-given history. This so-called science continues to be disputed, but much of it, like the survival of the fittest, is now rejected. So let us believe the truth as found in the Bible, and in Jesus Christ: God created us, and he did so that we might worship him because our life is from him and in him.

**2. Man makes gods- sin**

The only begotten Son of God came into the world, ‘full of grace and truth’ (1:14). He came as the Light of the world; the light shines in the darkness (1:5). Many fear they will be sitting in darkness this Christmas- think of the people in Ukraine celebrating in a bleak, cold winter, thanks to Putin. I remember our first Christmas in India. We were cooking a chicken in an electric fry pan because we had no gas; then the power went out. We sat in the dark with a cold, half-cooked chicken celebrating Christmas!

Darkness is of course, a picture of sin and death. In John 3 we read, ‘The light has come into the world but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil’. Evil or sin came into the world with our first parents, Adam and Eve. Like people today listening to Darwin, they listened to Satan rather than their loving, creator God, and were separated from God. They were cast out of the light into the darkness of sweat, of disease, and of death. We have just emerged from a disease pandemic, but still war rages in the Ukraine and other places, and famine rages across in Africa. We celebrate while pain and suffering afflicts us and our world, often because of sin.

Jesus was born in a filthy stable. His parents fled the country with him when the king started murdering all baby boys in the region. Jesus grew up despised by the people, his own people: ‘He came to his own but his own did not receive him’ (1:11). This world is a dark place. Many are looking for the light but they are looking in the wrong places. They look to the stars, and to created things, beautiful as they might be. They look to themselves, as fearfully and wonderfully as we are made by God. Hindus in India have their festival of lights as they bow down to a multitude of idols. The lights cover the filth of their temples and holy places. Lights cover the filth of the dark places in our city- gambling houses, drug houses, and brothels.

Being made in the image of God, man searches for God. In his search he make gods for himself because he is blinded by sin. He makes gods of whatever created thing he can find; wood and stone are carved into images and set up as gods. Precious gold and silver are fashioned into a Ganesh god, a Buddha, or even a Mary. Some bow down and worship created things as they occur in nature; trees, whales, or themselves. Some are satisfied with things made of plastic. People become jealous of their gods, whether the carved image of a Hindu god, or the smart phone of a ‘lost’ young person.

**3. God becomes man- incarnation**

God’s power and majesty can be seen in his creation, in the stars, in the mighty mountains and the roaring seas- not to mention the storm and the flood. But sin has blinded man to this revelation. Instead of seeking the God of creation, we have made created things into gods. Indeed, man has become his own god; he allows the flesh to rule his life; he is driven by the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life. He is in a downward spiral of disillusionment, depravity, and death.

Into this darkness the God of creation has shone the Light that is his own Son, Jesus Christ. God did not abandon us when we abandoned him. Indeed, from the time man abandoned Him, God had a plan to bring us back into fellowship with himself. God declared death as the penalty for sin, and God does not lie or change his mind. That penalty had to be paid before God could have us back into his holy presence. The soul that sins will surely die. The only way it can live is if someone pays that penalty. But who?

Look around and see if there is a human being without sin; only such a person is able to pay the penalty of your sin. If there is no one, you have to pay it yourself. Don’t be deceived by those who say there are saints who have excess merit to give to you. Don’t think your parents have merit they can pass on to you. Don’t think you can accumulate enough merit to save yourself. And don’t think that men from mars or another planet will come to save you from death, as a friend of mine believed.

But who? There is someone who is without sin and therefore able to pay for your sin. We are reading of this someone here in the Bible. God who is holy and without sin came down to this world in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, meaning he is true the Son of God, and also the Son of Mary, the unique God-man (Luke 1:35). Jesus is God and without sin; he challenged anyone to convict him of sin (8:46). No one could find any sin in him, except that he claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus is also man, so is able to represent us, which is what he did when he went to the cross bearing our sin.

**4. Man becomes a child of God?**

‘But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name’ (1:12). The question mark is there because this blessing, this wonderful promise of becoming a child of God, is only for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

After Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, Peter preached, ‘Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins’ (Acts 2:38). About three thousand did just that that very day. The apostle Paul preached the same truth: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved’ (Acts 16:31). As he did so, many believed and the church grew. And so we have the church today, and so we preach the same truth. Will you believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Don’t you want to become a child of God?

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, but you who believe become an adopted child of God when you believe. How wonderful is that! You become a child of the King. You are no longer a ‘nobody’, a wanderer upon this earth with no place to call home. You are given a place in heaven. You may have a loving family here on earth, and I pray you enjoy time with them today, but remember your Father in heaven, and your loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, who will never leave you or forsake you.

When you believe in Jesus you are born again of the Spirit of God (3:6). You are born into the family of God. Being born ‘of blood’ or ‘the will of man’ is one thing. We are all born in this way. But you must be born again, you must be born of God, to enter into the family of God and to call God your Father.

This, dear friend, is the meaning of Christmas. Family, food, fun and fellowship is all very good, but without the truth of the incarnation and the redemption that is found only in Jesus Christ, Christmas, and life itself, has no real meaning. When you believe in Jesus Christ you become a child of God, you receive eternal life and an inheritance in heaven that does not fade and cannot be taken from you (1Peter 1:4). If you have this gift then you have life, you have the Light of life.