

SERMON 818

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2013

925th Week as Priest

751st Week at St Dunstan's

16th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

GOD IS WITH US

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Come into a broken and lonely world. Come into the dark night of our souls. Come and save us, who have waited our entire lives for this moment.

It is the fullness of time, and God our Father has chosen to send his only Son to us, to save us from the power of sin and death, to save us from our own sad selves, to save us for himself, to reconcile us and bring us home.

It is the very darkest and coldest moment in Creation, since the beginning of all things, and we are gathered in this holy place awaiting the arrival of the full revelation of God. It is the night of bleak mid-winter, a night of birth.

For centuries, we have waited for the Messiah, the Anointed One, to come and save us. Since the days of Isaiah and Micah, we have known that he would break into our world, bringing joy and justice, righteousness and peace, healing and hope.

And now is the moment, the Day of the Lord; this is the appointed time. And all the world groans in expectation and labor.

Our Father always does the unexpected thing. God makes all things new. God makes and remakes and transforms his Creation for his good pleasure, in a relentless pursuit of his people—making and remaking and transforming us, our souls and bodies, to restore us to himself, to reconcile God and man.

And there was a singular and spectacular way in which this great thing might be accomplished. Throughout the vast stretch of time, God has come to us in the joy and wonder of Creation, in the Calling of Abraham and Sarah, in the Covenant with his People Israel, and in the Giving of the Law. But God the Father remained distant, aloof, Holy Other. Now he comes as Holy Incarnation, and this is the moment in time which marks all division between what was and what is. We will never be the same again. What was before was flawed, incomplete—not as the imperfection of the Father, rather as a reflection of our own imperfect image.

And now comes the Perfect One, the Son of God. And despite all the prophecies and prayers, he is unexpected. Some imagined him to be a mighty and terrible warrior. Others dreamed of a king who would come and rule the nations with powerful swift sword. But he came, instead, as an innocent Child, a baby born of Mother Mild—the one, true Son of God, and yet more—he comes as Emmanuel, that is, Very God of Very God, our God who is with us.

He is God from God, Light from Light, and in this Holy Light, all darkness is banished. Angels and archangels sing his praises.

Shepherds and foreign kings sing his praise and glory. Our newborn King is the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of God, who gives himself to his people as a sacrifice and a pledge of our redemption.

No longer is God aloof and cold, distant and unknown. Now God is fully known in the person of Jesus of Bethlehem, born of Mary, the true Gift of God. He comes to us in the most human of ways—completely innocent and vulnerable. He is brought into the world by his Mother’s singular act of courage, which is true of every birth, every mother, every child. Now he is with us, and we are fully known, fully received and accepted by him. Now heaven and nature sing. For unto us a Child is born. Unto us, the Gift is given.

Finally, it is all quite clear. This is the way things had to be from the very beginning, from the immense singularity that banged its way into being, creating all matter and energy, all possibility and potential. It was God’s good pleasure to reconcile all things, all people, all creatures, all Creation, to himself. And this holy night, God makes and remakes all things new. This night God transforms us with steadfast love and a yearning for us that we can only see through a mirror dimly, a glory that we can only get a glimpse of around a corner. God’s love pours out upon us in new birth.

And we are filled with overwhelming silence, we are struck with awe and wonder at his coming; we are suddenly, miraculously, face to face with Mary’s Child, who is the Son of God. **AMEN.**

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