

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

December 25 2021

Titus 3:4-7

John 1:1-18

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth,
when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

There are two times when every angel ever created gather together
to praise God for His marvelous works.

The first time is the dawn of Creation, as the text I just read stated.

The second time is the birth of Christ.

The morning stars—the angels themselves—that once sang at the dawn of Creation
now sing at the dawn of the Incarnation—a song we sing as well...
glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth.

They sing because Christ Jesus is God become Man.

And when God becomes Man, with skin, eyelashes and elbows,
nothing is ever the same again.

He who once spoke the universe into existence,
who fashioned Man from the dust of the earth,
now wraps Himself in the dust of the earth—
weaving Himself into One with DNA and human cells,
knitting Himself together with our humanity
in His Virgin mother's womb.

God becomes Man—

and at this the angels shout for joy, filling Bethlehem's sky with their praises.

So let us rejoice as well—

in the mystery of God made Man by singing our Exordium Hymn—Hymn 391.

391 Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn

Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn,
 A Savior unto us is born,
 The Christ, the Lord of glory!
 His lowly birth in Bethlehem
 The angels from on high proclaim
 And sing redemption's story!
 My soul, extol
 God's great favor;
 Bless Him ever
 For salvation;
 Give Him praise and adoration!

Let us pray. Most merciful God, You gave Your eternal Word to become incarnate of the pure Virgin. Grant Your people grace to put away fleshly lusts, that they may be ready for Your visitation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who live and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sitting...

In John's account,
 the more familiar elements of the Christmas story are stripped away.
 We hear no singing angels.
 We follow no searching shepherds and there's no indication
 of a humble manger.
 Instead, we're given a glimpse
 into the immense and profound mystery
 of the Word—who was with God,
 who is God and how that Word
 became flesh.

John records, "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*"

The Word translated "dwelt" is "tabernacled" or "tented."

The Word became flesh and tabernacled with us.

This recalls the Old Testament tabernacle

and all the theology that came with it.

All being brought down to us in the flesh of Jesus.

So, let's back up bit in order to really get a running start at this verse.

We remember first, with a bit of horror, how it was in the Garden of Eden
after Adam and Eve sinned.

They clothed themselves in fig leaves...but that wasn't all.

When they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the Garden
they ran—and hid from God.

That's terrible—it's spiritual death.

When they heard the footsteps of God,
they should have run to Him.

But the effect of the Fall
had already manifested.

It's horrible that Adam and Even run and hide from the presence of the Lord.

But, at the same time—it's right.

Adam and Eve know, almost instinctively, that it is not safe for them
to stand before God anymore.

It's no longer safe for them to be in the presence of God.

For God's holiness now becomes a consuming holiness.

It wasn't like that before the Fall.

Before, Adam and Eve could walk and talk
and share in a communion with God
that was perfect.

But now—

that ship has sailed,
and they hide.

Why? Because, the presence of God is dangerous for sinners.

For Adam and Eve, for you...for me.

Meaning that if God shows up in His unveiled glory, we are consumed.

You heard it from me last week,

but something like this happens after God rescues the people from Egypt
and brings them out in the wilderness.

There, the glory of the Lord descends on Mt. Sinai,
where He speaks the Ten Commandments.

The people say, "Don't talk to us anymore,
we can't take it."

"Moses, you go and find out how it is with God
and come back and tell us."

The people simply can't take the direct word of God. It's too much—
 it's dangerous. And even though it's horrible to consider,
 it's right that the people say this.

They are right that they cannot handle God's presence.

They are right that they cannot handle God's glory.

In fact, you might recall God telling Moses in Exodus 32,
"No man can look upon my face and live."

This is not because the face of God is destructive—the face of God is glorious!

The face of God is wonderful beyond our imagining.

The face of God is holy and perfect...

and that's the problem...we are not holy and perfect.

We are fallen sinners.

We are unholy and unfit for the presence of God.

You know, so many Christians foolishly assume that they can have this
 direct encounter with God.

Unmediated.

Super high octane.

200 proof.

What they don't realize is, that is not safe.

For if we sinners were able to simply walk into the presence of God—
 we'd be just like Isaiah of old who when He encountered God
 high and lifted up in Isaiah 6.

At that moment,

Isaiah felt like he was coming apart
 at the seams.

And this is why God gave instructions to Moses to build a tent—a tabernacle.

So that God could be in the midst of His people without destroying them.

The Lord wanted an address right in the middle of the camp.

So, He institutes a way so as to hide His glory

that He may dwell with His people without destroying them.

That's what the tabernacle is.

That's what the tent is.

That's what the sacrifices are.

That's why the priesthood is established.

It's so God can dwell in the midst of His people
 without destroying them,
 or consuming them in His wrath

over their sin.

God hides Himself so He can bless—
 covering Himself
 with the tent, the blood and the sacrifices...
 So, He can be there to bless them.

Once again, John says, *"The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."*

Which means that now, the glory of God is hidden in the flesh of Jesus—

and it's for the same reason...so that He does not destroy us,
 but rather bless us, forgive us and save us.

Get that! Jesus wraps His glory in the humility of our own flesh and blood

so that He can be our Brother,

so that He can walk in our midst,

so that He can teach the people,

heal the people and provide a way

back into the glory of God.

Jesus in the flesh means that when they hear Him

walking, they don't have to run

like Adam and Eve did.

No—they can come and find Him

and be blessed by Him.

And by dressing up in our humility; by God eternally wrapping Himself in our flesh,

this is what makes Him Immanuel,

God-with-us—not God-far-away,

but rather a God-very-near.

Beloved, the Word did not become flesh

so that you might have a few days off from work,

experience some warm fuzzies or enjoy quality family time.

The Word became flesh to pay the awful price for your sin—

with His flesh being nailed to the cross and His blood

draining from His lifeless veins, by which you are forgiven.

The Word became flesh to baptize you into His death and resurrection

that you might be His child, now and for all eternity.

The Word became flesh to drink to the dregs the cup of God's wrath

so that you might drink only the cup of His salvation.

So, what happens in the Incarnation is God making a way
to stand before Him without being destroyed—without being consumed.

It's what He's doing in the forgiveness of your sins.
It's what He's doing when He feeds you His body and His blood.
It's what He's doing when He's preaching His Word to you.

And beloved, when Jesus comes again in glory,
He's going to indicate it, not with footsteps but with trumpets.
Not with, "Where are you?" But with the voice of the archangel—
with the shout of God.
And when we hear this,
we won't be like Adam and Eve running and hiding.
Because of what Jesus has done,
when you hear that sound,
you will turn towards God, and run to Him,
so you can be in His presence.
It will be safe for you
because of what Jesus has done.

And you, together with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven,
will rejoice eternally.
So, sing with the angels this day!
For the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us.

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

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and
minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.