

‘Immanuel’ Means God With Us
Isaiah 7:14
Advent Sunday I, November 30, 2014

Beloved of the Lord.....When you think of the month of December, which we are about to enter, what do you think of? Certainly Christmas comes to mind, the decorating of house and church, shopping for presents and the like, but how often do we turn our thoughts to Jesus, and think about His birth? I am afraid 99% of our thoughts (or more) are devoted to everything else, but the birth of Christ, or His coming. December has become such a busy month for us all, I almost fear it. There is so much to do and so little time, and our thoughts are scattered everywhere but where they ought to be.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Because God has put His Spirit in you, He can help your busy thoughts to be overcome. Since we are now in the season of Advent, namely we only have four Sundays before Christmas, I urge you and encourage you to really apply yourself this Advent season, to meditate and think about Christ Jesus your Savior. Take the time to sit down and read your Bible. Read Matthew chapters one and two, Luke chapters one and two. If you have books with devotions or good sermons, search out those which are about the birth of Christ, or anything related to the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. Even now consider how "God is a Spirit" as the Bible says, but there was a time when God and man became one, in that little baby named Jesus, who was once in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus came to redeem you from sin, and this was His lowly beginning as True man, for "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given!" When the baby Jesus was born, consider how the Lord of the heavens now had human flesh and blood by way of His mother Mary (yet it is He, Jesus, who created woman, a mother). The Lord now had a human heart, little human hands, little human feet. God had ten little fingerprints. Also God now had a face of flesh and blood, and even before His birth this was all being shaped and created within by the Maker of heaven and earth. When Jesus was born, the angels who watched from heaven, so the Son of God with a human face! As our hymn says, "Jesus came, the heavens adoring!" It was incredible for the angels now to see how God would become a Man for our sake. "What Child is this!" His birth into this world is of such a wonder, that the Bible says, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Therefore this Advent Season, let us truly ponder in our hearts this wonderful mystery, of how God and man are one in Jesus Christ. Immanuel means GOD WITH US.

I. A Virgin Shall Be With Child. We begin with the virgin birth, which God had long ago ordained, and prophesied. Seven hundred years BEFORE Jesus was born, Isaiah foretold, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." Something would happen, that had never happened before, a virgin would conceive in her womb an infant, without the seed of a man. This miraculous conception by a virgin was even spoken of in the Garden of Eden. To fallen Adam and Eve the Lord spoke of "her seed" or the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Eve. While by natural order it is the seed of the man which causes a woman

to conceive, it would not be so when the Son of God was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Her seed, the Seed of Mary came from God. When Mary herself was puzzled as to how she would become pregnant, having never known a man, Gabriel explained, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

We should remember that God likewise prepared Joseph, for the great miracle of the Virgin birth. For Joseph was minded to divorce Mary, when he discovered she was pregnant. He assumed what any reasonable man would assume. Yet pregnant Mary was still an honorable virgin. God told Joseph through an angel, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The angel quoted Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son." Joseph knew the prophecy of the virgin birth. And we notice the prophecy does not say a virgin shall become pregnant, rather a virgin IS pregnant, and a virgin bears a son! Therefore Jesus had no human father, only a human mother! Jesus therefore received His human nature from the Virgin Mary, yet the sinful nature of Mary was not passed on to Jesus, for even in the womb Jesus is called "that holy thing" by the angel.

II. God is with us still today. And so it was a curious sight for the angels to behold on that first Christmas night as the baby Jesus lay in the manger! They saw their Lord in a cradle. This Son of God was their beloved Creator whom they had worshipped and adored for 4000 years! By the same token Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds saw a human being, one of their own, a little baby with hands and feet, yet this baby was the Lord! O how they loved Him and rejoiced to see this great mystery! "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen!" They had seen Immanuel, God WITH us.

This is the way and manner our Almighty God chose to rescue and save mankind from sin. For here the Son of God forever joined Himself to the human race, becoming one of us, never to be apart from us our separate. In the Old Testament God promises God will become Man. In the New Testament God becomes Man. In a manner of speaking, all the Gospel promises in the Old Testament are thus like an engagement before marriage. God has promised He would become a Man, namely the Seed of Eve, but this marriage between of God with man did not take place until the Virgin Mary conceived. When our Lord Christ thus joined Himself to flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin Mary, a kind of marriage took place. The Divine and the Human became ONE, our Immanuel, God with us. Still today we have His promise He will never depart or leave. We don't live in the Old Testament, but we are similar because we too have a promise from God just as they did. They had a promise God would become man, we have the promise God is man and Jesus will come again. All this is said so we realize the great strength and power of God's promises. Seven hundred years before Christ is conceived, God through Isaiah promises "Behold a virgin shall conceive." Likewise our ascended Lord Jesus has promised us through the angels, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come

in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” This promise of the angels is God’s promise to you. At His Second Coming, Jesus will again appear in the clouds, and then take us up to heaven. Why are we then so fearful on earth, when we have such strengthening promises? Let us rather say “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

His first coming was then silent, on that first Silent Night. His Second Coming however will be loud, announced by the angels with trumpets. God will then gather all the elect, and so all you need until that day is the promise, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This means Jesus is with us always, even in His own body of flesh and blood, but it means also Jesus is with us in Spirit by His Word until the end. Whenever you read, mark, learn, or inwardly digest the Scriptures, Jesus comes to you, for “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.” And so when we face trials and temptations, we should not be trembling cowering soldiers of Christ, for we are not alone on the battlefield, but Jesus is with us always. In God's kingdom of grace, we do not face our enemies alone because we have Immanuel, “God with us”. Nobody can defeat Immanuel. No devil can overthrow Him. Indeed all the evil angels tremble before Jesus because they know His great power, and they His sentence, His condemnation to eternal hell. We however who believe in Jesus, have a promise to the opposite effect. Jesus has paid our hell upon the cross, and Jesus promises us heaven. Jesus does not call us devils, but the “children of God”, even adopted by His Spirit. Jesus has given us the Gospel promises of grace and salvation, life everlasting, and “peace on earth.” Indeed the more we learn of Jesus and understand Him better, the greater we will love Him and live without fear.

So your Lord says “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Why would you fear a defeated enemy, whom God has already defeated by the cross? Your sins are forgiven and Jesus rose from the dead. “O death where is thy sting?” As for your enemies of the world who hate you and persecute you, why fear them? Love them and pray for them for they can still be saved if they repent and believe as you repent and believe. But if your enemies do not convert, they await a terrible judgment for their sins, for they despised their own Savior. You have done this too, even resisted His Spirit, yet He still came with His grace and Jesus overthrew the unbelief of your soul. If God has such power then to convert your stubborn and sinful heart, it is reasonable and true by God’s Word, God’s Spirit will preserve that very faith which He already gave you. God’s Spirit likewise can say, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” Those walls, by the way, are the walls of the Holy Christian Church which is Spiritual Temple, for it is the Holy Body of Christ. Jesus cannot be apart from you, any more than a man can be apart from His own body.

And so dear Christian, as we enter the glorious season of Advent wherein we prepare for Christs’ coming, let us”Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” Let us kneel before the

Lord our Maker, for He is our God.” Bow again before the manger, and with a contrite heart, meditate upon His lowly birth. Bring to that manger the best gifts you have to offer, and remember that all your gifts and talents are on loan from God. Don’t use them to your glory, but His. Let even your body become a living instrument, a musical instrument which sings His glory before the world, and remember also you are a lively stone, one part of one building, the Church of God. It is truly an honor to be a part of this spiritual house which contains Christ’s glory. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” In these next few weeks leading up to Christmas, don’t let the “busyness” of the season rob you of the comforts of Christ. Think about the coming of Jesus, and His lowly birth. Be a Mary, for “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” Amen.