

The Feast for the Nativity of the Christ

John 1:1-5, 9-14

Let our gladness have no end, for to earth did Christ descend. On this day God gave us Christ, His Son, to save us; now, this is worth repeating, so we do, in the hymn: Christ, His Son, to save us.

In recent years some have made much of theories that this is not really the date on which our Lord Jesus was born, and that His Church had other reasons for choosing this date for the celebration of His birth, and they have held these theories up as definite proof that our Lord Jesus was not born at all, and He is certainly not the Christ. But never mind them; to them it *also* applies what the holy Apostle Paul writes about something else: *Let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon ...*

For the Church of Christ it is not a disturbing suggestion, or even a surprise, nor should it be for His Christians, that it might not in a literal sense have been on this day God gave His Son to save us. After all, we know that the Son of God came into the world approximately nine months prior to His birth, as do all other human beings, as any unborn child *is* a human being, and everybody knows this, even those who are desperate to deny it.

More importantly, though, we also know that God resolved in His heart to give His Son to save us before the foundation of the world; and what God has resolved in His heart is done already in the heart of God, which means that it really is as done, as that which is in the heart of God is what is really real, and real reality.

So let our gladness have no end. From eternity, in His own reality, which is beyond all time and all dates, God gave us Christ, His Son, to save us. And later He *came* to us, in time. The true Light, which enlightens everyone, came into the world, in whom is that light which is the life of men, and of women, also, for that matter, which is exactly the point.

Our Lord Jesus, whose birth we celebrate today, with no worries whatsoever as to whether or not today is actually the exact anniversary of His birth, He is the true Light which enlightens everyone. In Him is the light which is the life of men. He is the Fount and Fullness of all light and of all life, the Son of God who was forever with the Father in His glory, and in that love which was forever in God, between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is also the love out of which all life came into the world.

For it was out of His *love* God created all things in order for all things to be given to His most beloved creatures, which would be us. And when God had created all things, all was ready for Mankind to be made to be there for God to love and give all things, all out of His goodness. He made us for His love.

Therefore God, whose nature is *love* made Man in His own image, with the capacity for love, in order for us to live with Him in love. And He made Man as man and woman, made to live together in love, and to reflect His love in the created world, in that out of the love of man and woman new life comes into the world, as all life came into being to begin with out of the love of God.

And our Lord Jesus, whose birth we celebrate today, it was *through Him* all things were made, and we ourselves, out of the love of God. For He is from eternity One with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the eternal love of God. And to God it was always all about Him, the Beloved. We were made for *His* glory; and the love of God out of which we were made, it is in Him it has reached its fullness and its fulfilment, in Him whose birth we celebrate today, and it was always meant to be.

Yes, for God made us for His own *life*, to share His own life with Him, through Christ the Beloved. And this holds true for each and every one of us. As He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it of all who are of the faith: *God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. To God it was always all about Jesus, always all about Him whose birth we celebrate today.*

It was in the heart of God from eternity to glorify the Son by making Him Saviour for us sinners. In this the goodness of God was to be glorified, fulfilled and revealed in its fullness; that for love of us, who turned away from the love of God to seek our own instead, and the love of this world, the Son of God would leave His heavenly home in glory behind to come to us and give Himself up for us, and give Himself over to the fullness of death, even His own judgement against our sin, against all evil and impurity and ungodliness in our hearts and minds, and bear it for us, for love of us, to restore us to His love and His heavenly life in the fullness of His goodness and His glory.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, as the holy Apostle John writes it elsewhere, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

Or as we heard it today that he writes it: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

This is the glory the Father gave to the Son from eternity: the glory of our salvation. And to God, this is the greatest glory of all, and the glory most precious to Him, and the greatest glory even God knows to bestow upon His Beloved, for nothing is more precious to God than our salvation. As He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it, it is because of what the Son has done for our salvation that God *has highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name that is above all names, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord!* This is the glory of the Father: that this is how He has glorified the Son. All angels rejoice at this; so let us also, by all means, rejoice at this: that from eternity God gave us Christ, His Son, to save us; and let our gladness have no end.

Such is the love of God, so good is He, that for our salvation He would not spare His own Son, rather, He who is Himself God from eternity came to us for our salvation, to give Himself up for us, and give Himself to us.

Let our gladness have no end, for to earth did Christ descend. On this day God gave us Christ, His Son, to save us, which is well worth repeating, so by all means, let us: Christ, His Son, to save us. Whether or not this is actually the exact anniversary for His birth, God resolved it in His heart *from eternity* to give Christ, His Son, to save us, and so it is *eternal* reality, from eternity and to eternity. And on this day, also, God gives us Christ, His Son, to save us. And although it does not rhyme, let us repeat that, also, and let our gladness have no end; on this day God gives us Christ, His Son, to save us.

Yes, for on this day God has His Word spoken to us, of His salvation; today, again, the Word of God comes to us. And the Word of God is He Himself, whose birth we celebrate today, our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who was in the beginning with God, and by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made of all that was made.

In the Word of God of His salvation, *He* comes to us who is Himself the Word of God, and His salvation, whom God gave to us from eternity.

He comes to us and declares us to be His own, whom He has won for Himself with the life He has lived for us, in full and complete love and obedience to God, and with His innocent sufferings and death; He comes and claims us as His own, and we are that.

And as the Word of God is spoken to us, and He claims us as His own, He makes us to be that, with the same power with which He once spoke: *Be light!*, and all things came to be.

As we also hear it today: *to all who did receive Him He gave the right to become children of God, to all who believed in His name. And they were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but born of God.* He who had Himself born as one of our kind and lived for us and died for us, He has won for us the right to be children of God with Him, heirs with Him to the Kingdom and to all heavenly glory. And He has us born anew to be that, into a new life with Him.

Before the Father He claims us as His own, free in Him from all sin and guilt, and righteous before His judgement, and so we are that.

And with His Word of His love and what His love has done for us, which is what His faithful Church proclaims in the worship of His salvation, He offers Himself to us and gives Himself to us with all that He is and all that is His.

And as He speaks His Word of life to us, who is Himself the eternal Word of God, and the fountain and fullness of life, He speaks His own life *into* us, so that we come alive from the death of disobedience and defiance and come alive to Him to live with Him, and we shall forever, in the fullness of His goodness and His glory.

With *His* Word, He who is Himself the eternal Word of God gives His own Spirit to us, His very own life, and His innermost self, so that we are one with Him, and one Spirit with Him. And the eternal Word of God, who had Himself made flesh and blood, He gives His flesh and blood to us to eat and drink, for real, in bread and wine, in His festive meal of salvation, so that we are one body with Him, each and every one of us, and we are His body together, as His Church and His Christians, and that we shall be, also, forever, and be with Him in His eternal Kingdom of goodness and glory.

So let our gladness have no end. Alleluia. Unto earth did Christ descend. Alleluia. On this day, as we are gathered under His Word and worship, God gives us Christ, His Son, to save us, nothing less. And this is worth repeating, so by all means, let us: Christ, His Son, to save us.

Glory be to God on High, and on earth peace, good will toward men! *Amen.*