



SERMONS FOR ADVENT

Sermon Notes

On the Incarnation: The Sending of the Son

Philippians 2:5-11

December 2, 2012

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

- It seems that every year around this time, the Christmas season begins earlier and earlier. This year is certainly no different, as the first signs of Christmas began emerging nearly a month ago. But I must admit, I do love this time of year. I love the cooler weather, the colors, the lights, the music, and the time with family. And I suppose, this puts me in the same camp as most Americans. In fact a recent Gallup poll indicated that around 95% of all Americans celebrate the Christmas holiday.
- But, as much as I enjoy Christmas and this time of year, I must say that I do not hold the holiday itself as “sacred” in any way. Yet, even if the holiday is not sacred, the historical event upon which it is based most certainly is – that is, the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Incarnation of Christ was, indeed, the turning point and watershed event in all of history. And I ask you this morning: Do you understand just how profound and bold it is for us as Christians to claim that the Incarnation is true? Have you

considered as well, the profound implications of the truth of the Incarnation in your life and the life of the Church?

- These are the questions I would like to seek to address in the coming weeks. Taking Paul's great passage, often referred to as the *Carmen Christi*, or the "Song of Christ," I would like us to explore the multiple applications of the Incarnation in the life of the believer and the Body of Christ.

December 2: *On the Incarnation: The Sending of the Son*

December 9: *On the Incarnation: The Humility of the Son*

December 16: *On the Incarnation: The Obedience of the Son*

December 23: *On the Incarnation: The Exaltation of the Son*

December 30: *On the Incarnation: The Worship of the Son*

THE SENDING OF THE SON

I. God's Work of Creation

II. The Fall of Creation through Adam

III. The Redemption of Creation through the Son

I. God's Work of Creation

- We begin our study of the Incarnation where the Bible begins – in the story of Creation.
- I am confident that few of us understand the glory of God revealed in the Genesis account. I believe that we, far too often, view the Genesis account through the lens of science and chronology than through a lens of faith and theology.
 - The Genesis account, indeed, exalts our Creator and King and therefore makes the Redemption story.
 - For to understand and marvel at God's work of Redemption (or recreation), one must first understand God's act of Creation.

-
- This past January, I preached on the Creation account recorded in Genesis 1.
 - And it is again to this passage that we turn our attention now.

Genesis 1:1-2: “¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

- As we read here, God is first described in Scripture as Creator. Further, Moses uses a Hebrew merismus - “heaven and earth” – to describe the totality of Creation. In other words, “In the beginning, God created **everything**.”
- Then Moses writes, “² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.”
 - Bruce Waltke, in his article, *The Literary Genre of Genesis*, states that the point of the phrase “without form and void” indicates that the earth was “unformed and unfilled.”
 - Simply stated, the earth had no structure and no fullness.
- But, then, in Chapter 1 we read how the LORD then created both **form** and **fullness**.
 - This being said, the statement “without form and void” provides the basic hermeneutical key to understanding Genesis 1.
 - Moses also states “...and **darkness** was over the face of the **deep**...”
 - This could also be translated that “darkness was over the face of the abyss...” In other words, it was “dark” as opposed to light; it was the “abyss” as opposed to land or fullness.
 - From a literary perspective, it is as though Creation began with emptiness, darkness and chaos, and ends with fullness, light, and order.
 - That is, Creation is the process of the LORD **forming** and **filling** His Creation.

Consider the process of building a home. Perhaps a family chooses a wooded lot that first must be cleared. Once the lot is cleared, then the foundation is laid, the home is framed, and then the builders begin to build it out. Eventually, the home **formed** and completed. However, the completion of the home is just the beginning of the process of dwelling in it. The reason for this is obvious. The home may be *formed* but it must still be **filled**. Thus, the process of living in a new home involves two distinct steps: **forming** the structure and then **filling** it.

- So it was with Creation. **God formed it, then He filled it.**
- And this is the point of Genesis 1:

Creation goes from being **formless** and **void** to **FORMED** and **FILLED**.

- And so, when we read Genesis 1, we observe two triads of days that involve: (1) **forming** and (2) **filling**:

Acts of Forming <i>(First Three Days)</i>	Acts of Filling <i>(Second Three Days)</i>
Day 1: Separation of Light from Darkness	Day 4: Creation of the sun, moon, and stars
Day 2: Separation of Sky from Sea	Day 5: Creation of fish and fowl
Day 3: Separation of Earth from Sea	Day 6: Creation of beasts and humans
Day 7: Establishment of Sabbath (consummation, enthronement, and consecration)	

- And this is the glory and beauty of the Creation account. God establishes a Creation that is orderly, purposeful and structured.
- But the question remains: for what ultimate purpose? I do believe that the answer is clear: for His glory.
 - Now, this is not simply the “stock” Reformed answer to the question. Rather, it is clear in Scripture, as the Creation account finds its consummation in the establishment and enthronement of God as King of all Creation.

Genesis 2:1-3: “¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

- Scott J. Simmons in his article, *The Sabbath in Redemption History* [through www.monergism.com], writes:

“in the first three days, [God] formed habitable realms, and in the second three days, filled those realms with their **rulers**...the days of creation are organized thematically by Moses in order to bring out the “hierarchical order” of the narrative. On the fourth, fifth, and sixth days, God created rulers in a hierarchical manner to rule over the realms He created on the first three days. The rulers created on each successive day were given more authority than the day preceding. Man’s rule was even extended to cover the whole earth, not just the realm of land created on the third day.” **[emphasis added]**

- And then, finally, we see the institution of the Sabbath – **the greatest realm with the greatest ruler!**

- **The acts of Creation were for God by God.**

- And so we take our understanding of Creation one step further. That is, we understand that as the enthroned King of all Creation, God was establishing for Himself a Temple.

• And just as I described how we build a house by **forming** and **filling**, so God did with Creation. The great exception, however, is that He was building a Temple or Palace for Himself. In fact, in Hebrew, the word for “temple” and “palace” is the same word. Consequently, we see the royal and divine go hand in hand.

- Many (myself included) see the primary purpose of the Genesis 1 account being God creating a Temple (“not made with human hand”) for Himself.
- And so, with the establishment of the Sabbath in Genesis 2, the Triune God is enthroned as King in His holy sanctuary and Temple.
- As the King, He is seated, enthroned and in total control. Just as God sits in the Temple of His Creation as the One True and Living God, so He sits as King of all Kings:

Psalm 29:10:

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

Isaiah 66:1-2a: “Thus says the LORD:

“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?

² All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be,
declares the LORD.”

Richard Phillips comments, “The picture [of God’s rest after Creation] is rather that after having made and ordered and subdued the creation according to his desired plan, his control was so absolute, his sovereignty so unquestioned, that God enthroned himself without effective opposition. His reign is one of rest – that is, of absolute supremacy and unassailable sovereignty – so much so that he exerts all his rule from the position of rest... So when we think of God’s Sabbath rest, we should immediately think of his utter, uncontested sovereign rule.”

- Therefore, we learn many things from the Creation account. We learn that God created all things. He did so for His glory. All of Creation is God’s Temple. And once He completed His work of Creation, He sat enthroned as King, entering His Sabbath “rest” – that is, His satisfaction and enjoyment of His Creation.

- Yet, for the purposes of our study this morning, I want us to understand also the source or the agent of Creation. Most certainly it was God Himself who Created, but let us turn our attention now back to Genesis 1:1-3:

“³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”

- And so I ask, “**How** was it that God created all things?” The answer, according to Scripture, is quite clear: **Through His Word**.
 - But, then, we turn to John 1:1, which reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” From this, along with the account in Genesis 1, we learn that Creation was not just through an impersonal force or mystical words, but rather, **through the Person of the Son, the eternal Word of God**.
 - The implications for this are profound. Because the Son of God was the agent of Creation, the act of Creation was a **personal** and **purposeful** act.
 - Consider, for a moment a piece of priceless artwork by Michelangelo or Rembrandt. How does an original piece from one of these painters compare in value to a computer-generated piece of the same setting or scene?
 - Because the Son of God is the **second Person of the Trinity** and He was the agent of Creation, the personal “fingerprints” of God are on everything and everything has a purpose in His holy Temple.
- But this, then, brings us to Fall of man, for we know that this world is filled with troubles.

II. The Fall of Creation through Adam

- In Genesis 1-2, we read that the crowning work of God’s creation was the Creation of man – created by God in His image to be His representative in all of Creation.
- We also read in Genesis 2, the creation and establishment of the Garden of Eden, the particular location where God placed man.
 - The establishment of Eden comes immediately following the glorious account of Creation. From these two, we learn that God is both: transcendent, all-powerful and infinite in His glorious majesty; but we also learn that He is immanent and personal, establishing a particular location in which to commune with man.

- In the establishment of Eden following the establishment of the Sabbath, we learn that this was God’s plan – that man would enjoy and share in the blessings of the Sabbath – that is the enjoyment of God and all He has created.
- It is also worth noting that when God commanded Moses to build the Tabernacle, it appears clear that God was patterning the Tabernacle after Eden, thus demonstrating that the Garden was a Tabernacle in which God and man would dwell and commune together. A particular place within God’s vast Created order where the person of man could dwell with His personal God.
- Then, we read in Genesis 3:1: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other best of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”
 - And so, here we have the ancient, fallen Serpent challenging God’s rule in His Sanctuary.
 - Let us be reminded before we move forward that God is Trinity – He is triune, and exists eternally as three Persons. He is a personal God. Therefore, all sin is personal to God – who created all things good and for His glory.
 - We know this story and what happens, and eventually the temptation of Eve makes it was to Adam and in Him, who was the crowning work of God’s created order, **all Creation fell.**
 - Like I often say, we often underestimate the extent of the effects of the Fall of man because we fail to recognize the seriousness of sin nor do we understand the role of man in Creation.
 - But let us be clear that the furthest galaxy in our universe fell when Adam sinned.
- When Adam sinned, and all of Creation fell with Him, God would have been completely justified in destroying all of Creation.
- However, in His infinite wisdom and love, this was not His plan.
- **His plan was to confront to the reality of sin in the most powerful of ways – Personally.**

III. The Redemption of Creation through the Son

- We must remember that Adam’s sin was a **personal** affront to God. Therefore, it had to be dealt with in the most **personal** of ways.
- Yet, the effects of Adams sin were also great and vast – extending to all of Creation. Therefore, they had to be dealt with by God Himself.
- Not only this, it was not as though Creation needed to be “fixed” as one would fix a household appliance or an automobile. These types of items can be fixed by someone other than the original manufacturer or maker.
- **The redemption of Creation** would require much more than a “fix.”

Writing in the fourth century, the Eastern Church Father Athanasius, in his great work *On the Trinity* writes (Chapter 1): “We will begin then with the creation of the world and with God its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, affecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning.”

- The redemption of Creation would require none other than God Himself, and therefore, the Father employed His Son – as His agent – to enter into the created order that He had created and redeem it.
- But not only had sin affected all of Creation – it enslaved man in all aspects of our being – our minds, our wills, and our physical bodies. Although sin may appear to liberate us, it actually enslaves us.
- So the work of God’s Son would be great – to destroy the power of sin, redeem God’s people, and redeem all of His Creation.
- Consider the words of two great hymns:

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
He breaks the pow’r of canceled sin
He sits the prisoner free
His blood can make the foulest clean
His blood availed for me!

Joy to the World!
He comes to make His blessings known
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as, Far as the curse is found

- And so, Scripture declares that the Father sent the Son into the world to accomplish the mission of salvation and redemption. And this is what we celebrate as we remember the miracle of the Incarnation.

Galatians 4:4: “⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,”

1 John 4:14: “¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.”

- Now, given that every act of God is both purposeful and personal and reflective of His divine nature, the sending of the Son at the Incarnation can be no different.
- I never want to seem to “grind the axe” of Calvinism or predestination from this pulpit, but the Incarnation is a truth that must be understood in light of God’s plan for His particular people. Otherwise, I believe, it loses so much of its power and significance.
 - Unfortunately, it appears most Christians today view the coming of Christ in Bethlehem as God’s “Hail Mary” pass. I certainly do not mean to be offensive, but it strikes me that this is the case, as they believe that God sent His Son with the “hope” that men would choose to follow Him.
 - But the testimony of Scripture provides a much more personal and purposeful intention by God in the Incarnation.

John 6:37-39: “³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

- **In other words, the Father sent His Son into this world to not only redeem all of Creation, but to save His children and free them from the power of sin.**
 - As we so often say here, Christ did not come to this world to make salvation a possibility, He came to save His sheep.

-
- This truth reminds me of a story that made international headlines over ten years ago. On August 6, 2011, six women and two men from a German-based Christian organization called *Shelter Now International*, were captured by Taliban authorities in Afghanistan. The crime they were charged with was preaching the Gospel of Christ, a crime potentially punishable by death under the Taliban’s rule.
 - Among those arrested were two American women, Heather Mercer, 24 years old, and Dayna Curry, 30 years of age. The arrest and trial of these women was met

with international condemnation, but this would do little to change the mind of the Taliban.

- But one of the things I remember most about this story was when Heather Mercer's father traveled himself to Afghanistan in late August to get his daughter.
- For months Mr. Mercer, a former marine, pleaded with the Taliban to release his daughter, and in September of 2011, he even begged them to allow him to take her place in prison.
- Eventually in November of that year, anti-Taliban forces would rescue Mercer and Curry, reuniting them with their family.
- **This story, indeed, had a happy ending, but I recall well the purpose and passion of John Mercer in finding his daughter. He did not travel to Afghanistan to release just anyone – he went to save His daughter.**
- **And this is precisely what Christ did. The Father sent Him to save His people. Yet, unlike John Mercer, Christ is fully God and all-powerful. When Christ came into this world, there was no power that would be comparable to Him – for He had created all things in the beginning.**
- That is, Christ's success was guaranteed, and He would not fail, but would succeed in accomplishing all that the Father gave Him to do.

-
- And so, Christ came into this world in order to save His people and redeem all of Creation. Yet, the beauty of Christ's redemptive work is that Creation will eventually be even better than it was before the Fall, because Christ entered into it personally. That is, once the redemptive work of Christ is finished (at His Second Coming), no longer will the Creation be subject to sin or even the possibility of it for all eternity.
 - The final question, then, is how? How would Christ enter into the world in order to save His people and redeem all of Creation? The answer is found throughout the Scriptures, but we turn our attention to Isaiah 9:

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end.”

- That is, the way God will destroy the power of sin and the enemy and redeem all of Creation will be...through a baby.

Evangelist Michael Youssef writes: “The greatest paradox in the entire Bible is found in the birth of Jesus Christ. During the time of Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus was the greatest ruler of the world. He possessed absolute power and incredible wealth. Yet even with all of his earthly authority and riches, Caesar was just a man. When God Himself came to earth, He was not the leader of the largest empire. He was born as a poor and obscure child in Bethlehem. The pagan man, Caesar, was at the height of power; the God-infant, Jesus, was in the depths of helplessness. Caesar was the wealthiest man on earth; Jesus was one of the poorest. Caesar slept in a Roman palace on a golden bed covered with fine linens; Jesus slept in a manger, bundled in swaddling clothes.”

- And this is where we will pick up next week.