



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The mystery of the incarnation (God becoming enfleshed) is a wonder that can never be fully exhausted in our thoughts. That God would love us sinful human beings so much that He would deign to become one with us in our frailty is beyond our comprehension.

Yet our Triune God did not want to be known as a God who is far off or as one who is removed and aloof of our need. Throughout the Old Testament witness, our LORD continuously drew near to man as the Angel of the LORD, the burning bush, the pillar of fire/cloud throughout the wilderness wanderings, at Mt. Sinai's top, in the Tabernacle and the Temple, through the smoke of the burnt offerings, and the like. God always wanted to be near His dearly loved people, but our sins needed to be paid for lest His own holiness destroy us sinners inadvertently. The smoke, the cloud, the tabernacle all these means worked as a shield to keep us safe from God's full holiness! They were for man's protection!

Yet in the incarnation, God came to us so that we might finally and fully know Him and the thoughts of His own dear heart towards us! In that Baby born in Bethlehem we see the face of God who wants to be near us! Who wants to save us no matter the cost to Him personally! Who wants us to live with Him eternally! And so God became man.

Jesus came to earth in order to die, to be the sacrifice which would finally deal with our sins once and for all. And Jesus didn't shed His humanity once the sacrifice was complete, but was raised from the dead as a man, still bearing the marks of our freedom and life, so that He might remain our brother forever and ever, seated at the right hand of the Father, praying for us forever and ever. Jesus came to be our Saviour!

There is no safer mode for our Most Holy God to present Himself to us than in this precious child of Mary. As Martin Luther says it so well, you cannot fear a child! Jesus comes not to frighten or destroy us, but to save us!

Here's an excerpt from a sermon of our dear Dr. Luther for Christmas Day:

"Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather His flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that He should not terrify us but rather that with love and favour He should console and confirm.

"Behold Christ lying in the lap of His young mother, still a virgin. What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! What fairer than her youth! What more gracious than her virginity! Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to Him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in Him. Doubt nothing. Watch Him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with Him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. See how God invites you in many ways. He places before you a babe with whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear Him, for nothing is more appealing to man than a babe. Are you affrighted? Then come to Him, lying in the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid. You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust Him! Trust Him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became a man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of His most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that He is come, not to judge you, but to save." (From *Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, edited by Roland H. Bainton; page 33.)

In Christ's service,
Rev Joel V. Kuhl, Pastor