

Osaka International Church Daniel Ellrick
Date: December 24th, 2008 Title: Incarnation
Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11 Key Verse: Matthew 1:23
Special Events: International Christmas Eve,
Advent Candle #5 (Christ), Hands Mimic, Choir, Jeni solo

I. Introduction

Merry Christmas! Thank you for coming tonight and joining in our OIC Christmas Eve celebration. Regardless of whether you are a regular at OIC, or whether you are joining us for the first time tonight, we are glad that you are here. And I pray that all of us will have great joy in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ together.



In a few minutes, our OIC Choir will come and sing, and also the Hands Mimic team will be sharing with us. But first I would like to share a few things to help us appreciate the deep joy of Christmas. Let's begin by reading Philippians 2:5-11.

II. Scripture Philippians 2:5-11

- [5] Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
[6] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
[7] but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
[8] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!
[9] Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
[10] 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.

III. Teaching

These verses speak of a few of the key facts about the story of Jesus. In **Philippians 2:6**, we are told that, Jesus, **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”** These words speak of Jesus before His coming into this world. Jesus is God; and yet He does not cling to His place in heaven. Instead, Jesus leaves heaven and comes into this world. Jesus, **(Philippians 2:7) “... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”**

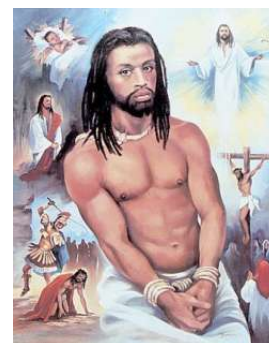


Here, Joseph and Mary are not mentioned, and nothing is said about Bethlehem and the manger, or the announcement the angels made to the shepherds. But that is what these words speak of, they speak of the incarnation of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity God, God the Son, coming into this world to be the Son of Man. **John 1:14a** says it this way, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** We do not understand how this can be possible. How can God become man?



It is a mystery. But we are not afraid of mysteries in the church, when we speak of the things of the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth, mysteries are inevitable. God's ways are higher than ours, because God's existence transcends time and space.

Beyond the words of the Scripture that tell us that the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and then the virgin was with child, beyond that, we cannot explain how it happened; it is a miracle. But we know why God did it. God did it for love. **John 3:16**, tells us, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are all a complete whole; a perfect miraculous gift of God given to us because of love, a gift that opens the way to heaven and eternal life when we place our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.



Philippians 2:8 spoke of Jesus’ life and death in these words, **“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!”** Some people may wonder why we speak of the cross of Christ when we are celebrating His birth. But it is almost impossible to speak of the birth of Jesus without speaking of His death. For Jesus came into this world for the purpose of dying on the cross for us, in payment for our sins. And He did it for love. Because Jesus loves each and every one, me and you, and you, and you - everyone!



On the cross, Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for sin; taking upon Himself the sins of the world and then dying in our place. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And He did this for us because of His great love. **Romans 5:8**, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**



But Jesus did not stay dead. On the third day He rose again, and He is alive today, and He is here with us. **Matthew 18:20**, **“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”** Jesus is always with those who call upon His name.



Here in Japan and around the world, loneliness is a big problem. There are over 30,000 suicides each year. The problems that people experience vary, but the reason so many give up is because they feel that they have no one to share the load with, no way out and no one to listen to them. In other words, people give up because they feel isolated and alone in their problems.

Mother Teresa spent her life helping the poor. She knew about poverty, but she said, *“Loneliness is the most terrible poverty.”* Money does not cure loneliness. Actress and author Joan Collins has said, *“Loneliness is the universal problem of rich people.”* Being physically with other people does not cure loneliness. Big cities are very lonely places, and people often commit suicide in groups.

But when we are in Christ, then Jesus is with us and we have each other, our church family as well. We are never alone, because Jesus is always with us. And when we come together in worship, then Jesus is with us in a very special and powerful way. The cure for loneliness is found in loving relationship with Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are never alone, we are adopted into the family of God and we share in the great blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. **Matthew 1:23**, **“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”--which means, “God with us.”**



IV. Conclusion

We give thanks for the birth of Jesus, 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. But the full joy of Christmas is found in the fact that Jesus is here with us now. Two thousand years ago, Jesus came in the flesh and everyone could see Him with their eyes. Today, He is present with us through His Holy Spirit, and we cannot see Him with our eyes. But His presence is still very real. Jesus is Lord and God; He is Immanuel, God with us. And that is Good News of great joy, good reason to celebrate. Let's pray.

V. Prayer