

## Why Did Jesus Come? Why did God send his Son? Why the Incarnation? (For CCS Chapel)

Two weeks ago, we considered the tabernacle and its parts. And as we look back upon this “tent” as the CENTER of Israel’s worship, today, we know that Jesus Christ is the TRUE tabernacle, of whom John the Apostle says, “The Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us.” And today as we take the Lord’s Supper, we remember the body of our Lord, who laid down his life on the cross. “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Today, I would like to help us remember and ask the question, “*Why did Christ come in the flesh and lay down his life?*” There are many reasons! But I want to use a famous work on the incarnation by a Christian in the 4th century named Athanasius. In possibly his most famous work he asks the question: Why did Jesus die? I will highlight 3 answers that will help us remember the death of our Lord this morning. 1) He came to turn the corruptible to incorruption; 2) He came to restore the image of God in man; and 3) He came to teach us about the Father and destroy the worship of idols.

1. He came to turn the corruptible to incorruption. God sent his Son for all mankind because we are corrupt. Before the fall, Adam and Eve had a different nature. There was no corruption. There was no need for the incarnation of the Word of God. But, they fell. They disobeyed. They sinned against God by not keeping his law. And with sin came corruption. And with this corruption came death. Before, incorruption and life ruled. After the fall, corruption and death was is their king (and ours).

This corruption doesn't simply include our bodies. It includes all that we are. It isn't like we are 25% corrupt and 75% incorrupt. Because of sin, all of us are corrupt. Synonyms for this word are: spoiled, contaminated, polluted, defiled, and rotten. What good is a rotten banana? It isn't even good banana bread. The same goes for other spoiled fruits. I simply throw them into the garden and they become part of the soil. Let me ask, “*What is the difference between people and a banana?*” The difference between us as sinners, and a banana, is that we were made in the image of God and our souls are immortal. And if a soul is corrupted, how can it live in the presence of a holy God? It cannot. Adam and Eve could not. We cannot! We are corrupt. Let me give another quick example: (living tree cut off from its source of life). So, what are the effects of this corruption in the world? (all kinds of sins, natural disasters, hate, killing, wars, brothers and sisters fighting against one another, etc.) Everywhere we look, we see corruption and the effects of corrupt natures.

Before the first sin of Adam and Eve (what we call the “fall”) and the corruption that followed, it was the Word of God that sustained them. It was the Word of God that gave them comfort. Really, it was the very presence of God that gave them life and everything they needed. This is why the Apostle John could say, “**In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God**” (John 1:1). But after the fall corruption came and the presence of God was not with men. And then there was a problem: How could that which is incorruptible dwell with that which is corruptible? This is why Jesus came. In John 1:14 He said, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**” Jesus came to undo what happened at the fall, to restore our incorruption.

Let me ask, “*Who is incorruptible?*” It is God alone! Though Jesus was born from a woman, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was God in the flesh, incorruptible. Do you remember

Peter's first sermon. He stood among sinners and said: "**Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--** <sup>23</sup> **this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.** <sup>24</sup> **God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. . .**" Then, a few verses later he says: "**For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption**" (v. 27). This is why Jesus came. He is the only one in the universe who could do such a work.

2. He came to restore the image of God in man. Let me ask, "*What makes you different than the animals?*" You were created in special way. You were made in God's image. What does this mean? This means we are like God in some way. We think, we feel, we love, we have intimate relationships with one another. But, there is so much more. If you have a Bible look at Gen. 1:26-28. Then God said, "**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**" <sup>27</sup> **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** <sup>28</sup> **And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."** You see, we were the only creatures with the special task of multiplying and ruling this entire world as God's special people. You see, Adam and Eve were to have children and spread out and fill the entire world and care for this world and rule this world. And in doing this, the image of God "in them" would spread. Goodness, hard work, care, love, good relationships, good use of resources, etc. And in doing this the world would look as God intended.

But what happened when Adam and Eve sinned. The image of God was marred, as we've seen, corrupted. Now, the image of God in mankind is still there, but it is no longer capable of filling the earth with good things. (Remember the broken branch.) Instead of spreading the glory of God and his purposes, we now spread the glory of sin, death, corruption, all kinds of evil. And this is why we see what we see in the world.

Now, at this point we must ask, "Is God defeated?" It may appear so to many in this world. But, the answer is no! Why? Because of the incarnation. This is why Jesus came: to restore the image of God in us. Rom. 5:8: "**But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet still sinners, Christ died for us.**"

Here, Athanasius asks a question. He asks: "*Why isn't repentance enough for God?*" In other words, why can't I just say, "*I'm sorry, please forgive me?*" When I sin against my wife, Kristen, I say, "*I'm sorry. Please forgive me,*" and so far, she has forgiven me every time. Why can't God do the same for us? In the Garden of Eden, why couldn't Adam and Eve have simply gone to God with repentant hearts and said, "*We have done wrong. Please forgive us.*" Have you ever thought about that? Well, there are two reasons. The obvious reason is that God would have been a liar. In Gen. 2:16-17 God said, "**You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**" God could not go against his word, namely that death is the penalty for sin. He

had to do something more than allow simple repentance. If he were to give in to his word, He would not be true. He would not be perfect. God is who He is and He always acts according to his nature. He always does what He says. And sadly, death must come!

Another reason is that God couldn't simply accept repentance because simple repentance would not solve the problem of our fallen nature (something had to put the branch back). The image of God in us was spoiled and repentance would not be enough. Repentance alone could never take care of this problem. If the sin of Adam would have simply been a misdemeanor, not affecting his nature and the image of God in Him, there would be no need for the incarnation. God had to stay true to his word. And, He did! For the wages of sin is death! But God commanded his love toward us in while we were yet still sinners Christ died for us.

You see, in order to restore the image of God in us, God HIMSELF must take care of this problem. So, why the incarnation? Why did Christ come? He came to restore the image of God in man. Col. 1:15-17: **"For, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** John 1:14: **"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."**

Today, most of the people in the world make God into their image, thinking that repentance may be enough. This thought is seen and heard every day. *"God is loving. He would never punish me as the Bible says." "I'm ok. I'm not that bad. And even if I do mess up, God will forgive me." "God simply wants me to do my best."* Sometimes your teachers curve your tests. But, God does not work on a curve. All the time people pray that God will forgive them. But, they do not consider the incarnation of Christ, who is the VERY image of God. They do not know the meaning of the incarnation. They also do not consider their natures. They do not know that their sins have separated them from such a loving God.

Most people do not think deeply about the incarnation. They picture the baby born in the manger, and the star in the sky, and the shepherds coming to worship, and the wise men from the east bringing gifts. Many people today don't think about the incarnation at all. Christmas is no longer Christmas, but simply a holiday with gifts and buying and selling and family gatherings. It is the time when Santa comes to bring gifts. Brothers and sisters, Christmas is about the incarnation. Today, Jesus came to restore the image of God in us. This is why He came. Oh what a message for the nations! Oh what a message for lost sinners. Oh what a beautiful glorious thought for the Christian. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. I would urge you today to trust Christ!

3. He came to teach us about the Father and destroy the worship of idols. After the fall, our natures became corrupt. The image of God in us was spoiled. Because of the fall, Paul tells us in Eph. 2:1 that we are dead in our trespasses and sins. In Eph. 2:3 He says that we are *"by nature, children of wrath, carrying out the desires that belong to us naturally."* Because of this, He also says that that the god of this world has blinded our eyes (2 Cor. 4:4). As sinners we walk in darkness. Standing before a large group of Gentiles in Athens, Paul proclaimed: **"Men of**

**Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription. . . To the Unknown God."** Since the fall, men have worshipped created things instead of their creator.

All of us are idolaters at heart. Whether it is wood and stone, or the rain god or the fertility god or the sun god, or other gods like money and power and sex, whatever they might be, we are all idolaters. Since the fall, it is in our nature. Concerning creation, since the fall, men have looked at creation with wonder and awe, ascribing greatness to the One who made all. But, creation is still creation. It is still inferior to the One who created it. This is why God said, "*You shall have no other gods before me.*" After creation, God sent his prophets, men as we are, both to teach and to show us what God is like and what he required of men. Throughout history God even sent angels to speak of his glory. But, all of these were only to prepare us for the incarnation.

This is why we need the incarnation. This is why Jesus came. He came to teach us about God the Father and destroy the worship of idols. Jesus said to his disciples, "*If you've seen me, you've seen the Father.*" Another time he said, "*I and the Father are one.*"

Today, Jesus took on flesh. . . like us! He did this to show us the Father to make Him known to us. He did this also to destroy the worship of idols. At this point Athanasius speaks of the things we worship. He puts them in 4 categories: Creation, Men, Evil Spirits, and Dead Heroes. Concerning creation, men have always worshipped what has been made. Men have always been idolized and worshipped. Throughout history great rulers and leaders have been called "gods" and worshipped by their followers. Evil spirits have also been worshipped. Finally, great men who have died have been idolized and worshipped. If we think about these things we know them to be true. But, Christ is Lord of All! He is the creator and Lord of creation. Concerning the worship of men, Jesus is the perfect man. He came as God in the flesh and He commanded worship. Concerning evil spirits, He cast them out of men. He commanded them to go and to come and they obeyed his word. On the cross, He made a public spectacle of them all, "**disarming the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them.**" Concerning dead heroes, Christ also died. But unlike the heroes of old, he triumphed over death by rising from the dead.

Is there anything more glorious than the incarnation of Christ? In Eph. 3:17 Paul prays that "**Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith--that they may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**" About this prayer Athanasius says, "*For by the Word revealing Himself everywhere, both above and beneath, and in the depth and in the breadth--above, in the creation; beneath, in becoming man; in the depth, in Hades; and in the breadth, in the world--all things have been filled with the knowledge of God.*" Today, Jesus came to show us the Father and to destroy idol worship. Today, Jesus is Lord of creation. He is Lord of the earth. He is Lord of mankind. For, he took on flesh. He is lord of death. For He conquered death and rose again.

So, why the incarnation? I have only touched the surface! For all eternity, we will consider the great beauty of the incarnation and we will never exhaust its depths. For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. So today, think of these things. Share this most beautiful message ever told.

Contemplate such a wondrous thought that God came down to us. He came to make the corrupt incorruptible. He came to restore the image of God in us. He came to show us the father and destroy the worship of idols. He came to do so much more that I don't have time to talk about. So, what is our application from these truths?

1) Each of these truths help us understand what we call the Gospel, the good news about Jesus. So, think about these truths further. Share them with everyone around you.

2) These truths teach us that ONLY God can do what it takes to save us. You cannot save yourself. You cannot be good enough! Only God is good enough. And we know this because God sent his Son, who is God in the flesh, %100 man, %100 God.

3) The truth of the incarnation is our example as to how we must treat others. Phil. 2:1-9: **“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

My prayer today is that Christ will be so beautiful to you! Oh how I need him! Oh, how you need him! Oh how the world needs him! Let's pray!