

TEXT: John 1:1-5, 14-18

TITLE: What the Incarnation of God the Son Demands 2

OCCASION: Westminster Presbyterian Church DATE: January 8, AD 2012

Introduction

As we begin the New Year I want to press you to faith and allegiance to Christ Jesus as He is set forth in the written Word of God. You heard something of this in my charge to our new officers, already serving officers, and congregation, a couple of weeks ago. You remember the Apostle Paul in II Tim. 4:6, & Phil. 2:17, speaks of his life being poured out as a sacrifice to Christ and in service of the faith of fellow believers. You are familiar with Ro. 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." So here is a challenge to you in this new year to faith and allegiance to Christ Jesus. And to Christ Jesus not as our sinful imaginations may picture Him and what pleases Him, but as He has revealed in His written Word.

How shall we be encouraged to be engaged to Christ? How shall our faith be raised and the fervor of our devotion and consistency of our consecration be encouraged? By having set before us Jesus Christ. So we began by looking carefully into the words of the Spirit by the Apostle John where He clearly sets before us the identity of Christ Jesus come into the world. There are so many fronts in our modern context of skepticism and unbelief that John runs head on into! We noted that with a very clear allusion to the opening words of Genesis, John writes, "In the beginning was the Word." He clearly declares that God is and particularly states the Word was with God and the Word was God, affirming that God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, is fully and completely and eternally, God. Then in contrast to Christ's absolute existence from the beginning as God is creation. Everything else that is not God owes its existence to Him. This is so much contrary to modern skepticism which says that everything simply is and worships the creation rather than the Creator. Yet here John sets God apart from His creation and all creation as utterly dependent upon God, and that the Word is God. But then, the Word, who is the very same substance with God, as Jn. 1:14, declares, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem was not His beginning. It was the eternal Word, the eternal God, coming into the world of time and space and taking to Himself human nature.

Now the implications of this are as precious as they are vast! We just touched upon a couple: **First**, since Christ is God and man, let this be the foundation and strengthening of our faith. Our faith and hope are in God (I Pe. 1:21) Faith is built on God and Jesus Christ is truly God and therefore the most proper and fitting foundation upon which we must build our faith. I have often spoken to both married couples and to those seeking a spouse

about how they got to know that other person before they were willing to commit themselves to them for their whole life and go and have a family with that person. There was a warrant for such faith, trust, such love. So Christ is fully worthy of faith and trust. **Second**, since Christ is God and man, then we have great reason to admire and be amazed at His supreme expression of love. Christ does not give aid (Heb. 2:16), He does not take hold of and assume the nature of angels, but of men. The incarnation, Christ taking our nature is a foundational ground and pillar of your comfort in life and death, your confidence before God; for if He had not taken our nature upon Himself, we could never have been saved by Him. He took human nature body and soul to Himself that He might suffer and die under the wrath and curse of God due upon our sins. This is unique, great, incomparable love! **Third**, since Christ is God and man, then let this encourage sinners to come to Christ and cling to Him. It takes a great person to accomplish a great task and Christ is the greatest and has accomplished the greatest in redeeming us to God. So to engage you to be married to Christ we look to Christ in the greatness of His Person and Work. Let's continue to have our hearts and minds engaged in this challenge of faith increased, of fervor of devotion and consistency of consecration encouraged.

I. Since Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, then let us honor Him above all.

A. Why should we honor Christ above all? What does the Scripture say?

Col. 1:18, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." What place is Jesus Christ to have in your life? *He is the beginning, the first born from the dead...* Calvin, "...He is the *beginning*, because He is the *first-born form the dead*; for in the resurrection there is a restoration of the second and new creation, for the former had fallen to pieces in the run of the first man. As, then, Christ in rising again had made a commencement of the kingdom of God, He is on good grounds called the *beginning*....He is called the *first-begotten from the dead*, not merely because He was the first that rose again, but because He has also restored life to others, as He is elsewhere called the *first-fruits of those that rise again* (I Cor. 15:20)." By Christ's triumphant resurrection, *never-more to die*, Christ laid the foundation for that sanctified life, that hope and assurance in which His own people rejoice (Col. 3:1-17; I Pe. 1:3f). Christ's resurrection is also the beginning, the principle, the cause of the Christian's glorious physical resurrection. Thus it is true in every way what Christ said in Jn. 14:19, "Because I live you too will live." He is the path-breaker, who holds the keys of Death and the Grave. He has authority over life and death, as we have noted in Heb. 2:14, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." So Christ declares, Rev. 1:5, 18, "...Jesus Christ,

the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever....I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” It is our Savior Jesus Christ (II Tim. 1:10) “who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” To what end? *That in all things He may have the preeminence.* How can it be anything other than this when Col. 1:15ff, Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn - the first in honor and position over all creation, indeed the One by Whom and for Whom all things were created and consist; How can it be anything other than this for Christ who is the Head of the Church giving life and ruling His body - He is the One who is Firstborn, Point of Reference, Agent, Goal, Forerunner, and Sustainer-Governor over all the sphere of Creation and the Head of the Body, the Beginning, and Firstborn from the dead in the entire realm of Redemption! He is the One who has the pre-eminence, the Divine sovereignty - in all things.

Phil. 2:6-10, “...Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” This is the famous passage where speaks of κενόσῃς, of how Christ *made Himself of no reputation*, of Christ’s emptying Himself. What does this mean? Christ, as John expressed it as the Word from the beginning existed, was with God and was God, so here the Apostle Paul, that Christ, *who existed in the form of God*: That Jesus Christ existed in the form, in His essential and abiding nature He had always been (and continues to be) God (as we saw in Col. 1). But though existing in the form of God, He *did not count His existence-in-a-manner-equal-to-God something to cling to but emptied Himself*. How? (1) He gave up His favorable relation to the Divine law: In glory God the Son knew no burden of guilt in regard to the transgression of God’s law, but though spotlessly innocent and totally obedient as II Cor. 5:21, He “who knew no sin” was made “sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2) He gave up His riches. II Cor. 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” No room for Him in the inn. No donkey to ride into Jerusalem, but one that was borrowed. No house in which to lay His head. No tomb in which to be buried, but one borrowed. He who owned all became the One who assumed the greatest of all debts: Isa. 53:6, “And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (3) He gave up His independent exercise of authority and voluntarily submitted Himself to His Father’s will in the accomplishment of our redemption. Over and over again in John 5:30; 5:19, 14:24, Christ did not His will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. (4) He gave up His heavenly glory. “He

has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we did not esteem Him.” Isa. 53. Jn. 1:10, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.” Yet there was in His high priestly prayer in Jn. 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” The Light of light descended from the realms of endless day. The Lord of lords took human nature in order that as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah He would be humbly obedient even to the point of death, even to the point of death upon the cross, accursed, forsaken, the Lamb slain. To what end? “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name” Eph. 1:20, “...He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” So then, listen, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

B. What place is Jesus Christ to have in your life?

You must give Christ the preeminence in your life. You must exalt Him as high as God the Father exalts Him. What did our Lord Himself declare? What is the will of God the Father? Jn. 5:23, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” Christ having the same essence with the Father, the Father wills that He should have the same honor which He the Father has and whoever denies that to Him reflects dishonor upon the Father and our God is a jealous God who will not give His honor to another. Christ is due the highest respect, reverence, adoration, obedience, love which we can possibly give Him. Rev. 5:11, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” Dear people of God, you must honor Christ in a degree answerable to, in a manner commensurate with His nature as the infinite, most blessed, eternal God. Is there any honor high enough for Christ? Christ’s honor was dear to Luther as he wrote in a letter to Spalatine: “They call me a devil, but be it so, so long as Christ is magnified, I am well paid.”

If you honor Christ you shall be honored (I Sa. 2:30). You know the history of Israel is filled with attention arresting accounts of God’s judgments upon them as they dishonor God by killing the prophets and all who are sent to them by God and what judgment continues to come upon them. Or think of Herod as he imprisoned Peter and killed James with the sword (Acts 12:1-4) still the long-suffering of God was patient with him; yet he dared to take to himself the honor due Christ (v.21-23) God strikes him dead.

II. Since Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, then we learn how Christ's sufferings satisfied for our sins and redeemed us to God.

It is because of Who suffered; Who was the Lamb of God sacrificed, that His suffering had power and virtue to satisfy God's justice -- It was the very Son of God who suffered; the Word become flesh. His blood is, as I Pe. 1:19, "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." His blood actually avails when the blood of the animal sacrifices of the OT did not: Heb. 2:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The Church was purchased with (Acts 20:28) with the blood of God which as Gal. 4:4f, declares actually redeems "those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Was it man who transgressed the royal law of God? Amazingly then, God Himself became man to deal with that breaking of the law and satisfy divine justice (Ro. 8:2-4). For the man Christ Jesus to stand before the bar of God's law and to make full, complete restitution is the highest honor that could be paid to the law of God. As both God and man, Christ's sufferings, humiliation, satisfaction are of infinite value to meet the demands of sin before the infinite God. Without His being both God and man He could not have been our Surety in the covenant, never paid our debts, never satisfied God's justice, never have brought in everlasting righteousness (Da. 9:24), never as Col. 2:15, "disarmed principalities and powers...triumphing over them" in His cross and then ascending to heaven giving gifts to men.

How precious then must Christ be to us.....

Gospel invitation -- Honor Christ by taking Him as your Lord and Savior! Will you dishonor Christ by saying that you would rather keep your sins and run your own way rather than receive His mercy? Will you dishonor Christ by remaining aloof from His body the Church and remaining a part of the world?

Christian, if we are to give Him honor in accord with His Person and Work, then how can we not be in public worship on the Lord's Day - the day He secured our salvation by rising from the dead? How can we be reluctant to give ourselves to knowing Him in His Word, in prayer? How can we be silent about Him to others?