

“Jesus, Son of God, the Divine Lord”

St. Luke 1.35

Advent Midweek 3, 2005

The Word of God for our sermon meditation this evening was written down for our faith and instruction in the Gospel of St. Luke, the 1st chapter, this 35th verse “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”

Thus far in our Wednesday Advent meditations we have learned of Jesus as our saving Lord, the one who rescued us from our sins and as the Anointed Lord, the Christ, the One set apart from eternity as the only Redeemer and Way into heaven. This evening we will examine this brief passage from St. Luke’s Gospel which declares that Jesus is the Son of God, the Divine Lord.

One of the most difficult truths to wrap one’s mind around is the mystery of the person of Jesus. Even in Confirmation classes and among seasoned veterans of the faith there is a problem in understanding that Jesus is God, that He is true God, that He is just as much God as the Father and the Holy Spirit, even while, He is, at the same time true Man born of Mary the first Christmas. It can be a bit confusing and perplexing to our minds as we wonder how can one person be God and Man?

Let we flog ourselves too much, we should remember that this was among the questions that the Early Church had to deal with, let alone the first apostles and Gospel writers. In fact, for a few hundred years the church had an ongoing Biblical argument over the question of whether Jesus was true God with the Father from eternity or not. These weren’t just – let’s sit down and talk it out arguments. These arguments were arguments, punctuated with propaganda, political intrigue, and even violence.

Athanasius, after whom the Athanasian Creed is named, was actually exiled and kicked out of his church 5 times for holding to the truth that Jesus is both God and Man in the one Person Jesus Christ. This battle raged until the mid to late 400’s when the teaching of the person of Christ was finally set forth once and for all on the basis of the Bible, on passages like our Gospel reading for tonight where Mary is told by Gabriel that the Son born to her would be the Son of God, the Holy One of heaven and earth.

The only evidence that you see of this titanic conflict is in the creeds and hymns of the church, specifically the Nicene Creed where we hear that Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

Why such a fuss, we might ask, especially when we take this teaching of the Bible as undeniable fact? First, we might say that this is still an important issue when there are still groups out there that teach Jesus is not the Son of God as Gabriel teaches in our Bible reading. Yes, there are religious groups and sects that actually deny that Jesus is true God, that He was born into this world by the power of the Holy Spirit. The most prominent of these that deny the divinity of Jesus are the Jehovah’s Witnesses that flat out claim Jesus is not God and even rewrite their “bibles” to support their teaching. Add to them those who follow Islam, those who are of the Jewish faith, as well as many other cults and sects and we can see why the fuss is still important today.

Lest we think that this argument belongs only to pastors and those taught in the subtleties of Christian doctrine, we should consider this second point on why the fuss still matters. If Jesus is not divine, if He is not true God, He cannot, then, be the Savior of the world. Let me say that again – if Jesus is not very God of very God, Light of Light, of the same substance of the Father and the Spirit – then He cannot be the Savior of the world.

If Jesus is not God then He could not render the ransom required for the salvation of our souls. The Bible, the Word of God, states in no uncertain terms that mere man cannot save another from the judgment of sin. None of us, no matter how noble, how honorable, how good in the eyes of men, none of us can redeem the soul of another from iniquity and the fires of hell. As the Scriptures teach the redemption of our souls is costly and we cannot pay the price.

Only God can do this. God can supply the ransom required for our redemption from sin and our rescue from hell’s punishment. Only God can forgive and pardon our sins. Only God can provide atonement for our every iniquity. Only God can offer that sacrifice that can appease His holy wrath, propitiation His anger and

assuage His displeasure. Just as God alone can grant us entrance into His eternal kingdom, just as God alone can give us a Savior, one God could rescue and deliver us from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

So God came to us in the person of the Son of God and was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary the first Christmas. God came and lived with His own creations, His fallen creations so that He might return us to Himself cleansed and sanctified. God, the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, came to us to make us whole from sin and to give us that life that will never end.

This is why Gabriel tells Mary that the One who would be conceived and born of her is the Son of God. Only Jesus could accomplish what we and mankind needed. Only He, the Son of God, could offer that ransom, render that sacrifice and atone for our sins so that God the Father, God the Spirit, and yes, even Himself, God the Son could declare us righteous and saved by His grace. Only God could crush the Serpent’s head and give us victory over death and the grave.

In Jesus God has come and He accomplished this very thing for each and every one of us. That Jesus is God is not just testified in our Gospel reading by Gabriel, but also by St. John who writes “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Again, St. John records Jesus saying, “I and the Father are one...If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” Again St. John records our Lord saying “before Abraham was, I AM.”

Just as these words declare that Jesus knew He is God in the flesh, so also did the apostles and followers of our Lord know the same. St. Paul especially teaches us that Jesus is God when he writes the following “He is the image of the invisible God...by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell,

and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

St. John testifies saying “His Son Jesus Christ...is the true God and eternal life.” Again He says “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” The writer to the Hebrews declares, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” and “who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

More passages could be marshaled but the point is plain – Jesus is true God who was born of Mary to take away our sin and to open to us the glories of heaven. As our Divine Lord He laid down His life and took it up again demonstrating His power over sin, over death and over the grave. As our Divine Lord He subjected Himself to the hands of His creations so that by His nail-scarred hands He could redeem us, pay the price for our salvation, and make us His people through faith.

Since He is true God in the flesh Jesus’ sufferings and death, His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary satisfied the justice and holiness of heaven. Since, as God Jesus knew what was needed, He as our God and Lord, was able to render that atoning sacrifice so that you and I would never have to question or wonder about the peace and pardon that is ours in His name. Since He is God born of Mary true Man, our heavenly and divine brother, He defeated Satan and delivered us from hell’s punishments and pains.

Since Jesus is God indeed we know our salvation is secured since He ever stands before the Father as our High Priest. His life and death was the all-sufficient ransom required for the salvation of us all in body and soul. His resurrection proves that He has the power to grant us life from death and even more, to transform us with glorious bodies free from all the effects and consequences of sin. Only God can do this and this God did in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, the Divine Lord.

But not only is this our confidence as we go through life, but since Jesus is true God, we know that He is able to keep and fulfill His

promises to us. We know that He is with us as our Divine Lord and Shepherd ever watching over us wherever we go. We know that He is with us supplying us all the strength and aid we need no matter how dark and rocky the road. We know that since He is God He will not abandon us or forsake us for He is faithful to His promises.

This is why a fuss, if you will, must be made about this teaching and truth about our Lord Jesus even in our day and age. For it is the very foundation and source of all the comfort, hope, and joy you and I have in these lives that we live. He is our surety for the forgiveness of sins. He is our guarantee for aid and comfort in our daily lives. He is our God who never sleeps or slumbers but watches over all of us till He takes us to live with Him forever in His kingdom.

This is one of the truths about our Lord that we celebrate this time of the year. God has come down to us in Jesus, the Son of God, the Divine Lord. May we ever hold this truth near and dear to our hearts, share it with others and rejoice in all it means for our faith and life with Him. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+