

# ***“Jesus, Immanuel, the Incarnate Lord”***

## ***St. Matthew 1.22-23***

Advent Midweek 4, 2005

The Word of God for our sermon meditation this evening was recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, beginning with this 22<sup>nd</sup> verse “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

Tonight we conclude our Midweek Advent meditations on Jesus our Lord. To this point we have heard how He is the Saving Lord who has come to save us from our sins. We have heard how He is the Christ, the Anointed Lord, the only Savior chosen by the Father to give life eternal in heaven. Last week we heard how Jesus is the Divine Lord, that He is true God with the Father and the Spirit for all eternity come to return us to Himself that we might live with Him forever.

This evening we examine the Scriptural truth that Jesus, Immanuel, is the Incarnate Lord. One might think it strange that the Church through the ages has had to defend this teaching about Jesus. After all, isn't this the whole point of Advent and of Christmas? The Son of God is born of Mary, is made true Man with a truly human body and soul. The word “incarnate” means “enfleshed.” It means that Jesus became as one of us in every way without sin when conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of Mary. This is why the Scriptures teach and we celebrate at this time of year that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us, for the Son of God became flesh and dwelled among us.

Yet, because Satan is ever seeking to destroy true Christian doctrine and the faith of God's people, he sows seeds of false teaching in connection with the incarnation of the Son of God. The Apostles had to deal with this issue early on as a false teaching called “Gnosticism” circulated claiming that all matter was sinful and thus claimed that God would not have taken to Himself a human body. Jesus, they insisted, could only be a spirit and not God embodied in the flesh. Others later made the claim that Jesus did not have a soul and even today there are those who deny that Jesus died and rose bodily from the dead the first Easter. Among these are the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons to name a few.

Against such false teachings the holy writers of God's Word have written many words. St. Paul, for instance, writes in the Epistle to the Colossians "and you, who were once alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." Again St. Paul states in Colossians "in Him [i.e., Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." To Timothy Paul wrote "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

The holy writer to the Hebrews notes "inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, [Jesus] Himself likewise shared in the same...therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things before God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." So pernicious was this false teaching that Jesus is not God Incarnate that St. John writes these staunch words in his Second Epistle, "many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist...if anyone comes to you [teaching this]...do not receive him into your house or greet him for he who greets him shares in his deeds."

Elsewhere in the Scriptures we read of Jesus' very real human feelings and actions. We hear Him in the Garden of Gethsemane speak of how overwhelmed His soul was in His anguish. He tells the disciples following His resurrection to touch Him saying, "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." All throughout the Old and New Testaments we read and we hear the Son of God is true Man. Jesus as the Incarnate Lord has a human body and soul, though without sin, and has come to redeem all mankind.

Why is this important to keep clear and well defined the teaching of the humanity of our Lord in our hearts and minds? For the same reason why we must maintain that Jesus is Divine, that He is true God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity for all eternity. For if Jesus is not also true Man as well as God as a result of the mysterious personal union, then we are all lost in our sins. As one of the Church Fathers put it "He did not redeem what He did not assume." If Jesus is not our flesh and blood Savior, if He did not

take to Himself a body and soul, then we are without a Savior and without rescue from hell's torments of body and soul.

For remember, sin has corrupted us in both body and soul. Through and through sin has infiltrated us. Sin has so thoroughly engrained itself in us that by nature we are wicked and evil down to the very intents and impulses of our hearts and minds. Even God declares this about the human race saying in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, "every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually." Our bodies and souls are dead in sin, lifeless spiritually before God, incapable of good. That means we are lost and without hope in body and soul unless we have a Savior who has our nature.

We know this is true of us – both from the teaching of the Scripture and from our own humble acknowledgement of our sins and failings before God. We fight this very intent and inclination of our sinful nature each and every day by faith and by the Spirit. Those who are honest believers, whose hearts beat and minds do not give to deceit, know we are sinful, wicked, and evil to the very core of our being, in both body and soul. Oh, to be sure, we do some good things from time to time, but in our heart of hearts we know just how corrupt and wicked we really are, those parts of us that we would never, ever want anyone to learn.

But there is more, isn't there? For do not the Scriptures proclaim that there is no forgiveness, no remission of sins without the shedding of blood? Indeed, they do. No forgiveness unless there be an atoning sacrifice, a propitiation of God's wrath and justice on the wicked and evil men, women, and children of this world. An offering must be made in order for there to be peace and pardon between God and man.

But God cannot bleed. God cannot suffer. God cannot die. God could not act as our substitute under the Law. God is eternal right? God is Spirit right? God is our Creator right? Yes He is. In one of the greatest mysteries ever revealed to us in the Scriptures we learn that God cannot suffer, bleed, die and act as our substitute unless He take to Himself our human nature in Jesus, the Incarnate Lord.

For as the God-Man, Jesus bleeds, suffers, dies, and atones for our sins with His own body and blood. As the Incarnate Lord the One through whom all things were made is made Man and redeems His creation with His life. As Immanuel, God with us, we see God stepping in and acting on our behalf to rescue us from the eternal torment of hell decreed for the wicked and evil sinner.

For Jesus is truly God enfleshed, the Lord Incarnate conceived by the power of the Spirit and born of Mary the first Christmas. He lived, breathed, ate, drank, wept, suffered, and died as the Word made flesh come to save us from our sins. He, as our Sin-Substitute, our Divine and Human Savior, acted under the Law in our place, suffered and died for our sins in order to atone for all our transgressions of God's will and Law.

Veiling His divinity in the flesh, Jesus made Himself to be of no reputation. He went to a gruesome death on the cross, spilling forth His blood, sacrificing Himself both body and soul to redeem us from sin and damnation. True Man without sin, He was made to be Sin for us that He might bear the entire judgment on sin on our behalf. The third day He rose bodily from the grave to guarantee us that by faith we too will rise with resurrected bodies, with these very bodies freed from sin's corruption once and for all.

Not only that but Jesus ascended bodily 40 days following the resurrection in order to assure us that we will, in glorified body and soul, be raised to join Him in heaven when He comes to judge the living and the dead. In heaven He now sits at the right hand of the Father ruling the entire creation for the benefit of you and me, of all His Church. There He sends us help and aid for our lives since He knows just what it is like to live in this sin fallen world.

As the Incarnate Lord and Savior of all He knows how best to help us who He calls His brothers and sisters by faith. So writes the author to the Hebrews saying "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." And "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." This assures us that He is indeed God with us, Immanuel, by our side

through all things, supporting and aiding us in these lives that we lead.

Since Jesus is both our Divine and Incarnate Lord in one Person we have the surest foundation for our faith and life with Him. We know that our sins are forgiven us completely and forever since He has shed His blood and is our eternal High Priest. We know that heaven has been opened to us by He who left heaven to be born of Mary and who ascended into heaven bodily to guarantee us the resurrection to life that will never end. We know He is with us and that as our flesh and blood Brother He will ever watch over us and bring us safely to His Father's house.

So, as we approach the manger in faith again this year, as we kneel in faith before Jesus and marvel again at the wonders of God's love, love that moved Him to send His only Son into the world to be made Man to save us from our sins, let us rejoice that Jesus is our Savior, the Christ, the Anointed Lord, our Divine, Incarnate Lord just as the Scriptures teach. Amen.

**+Soli Deo Gloria+**