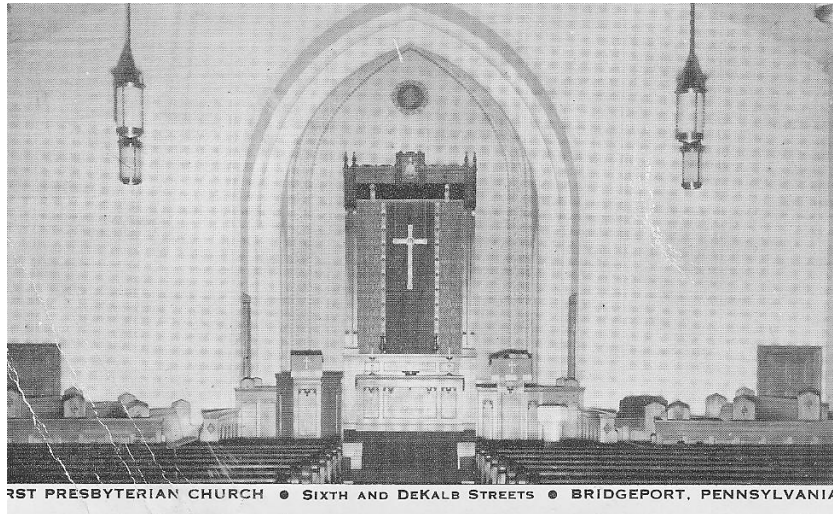


# HE CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS

A sermon preached by Rev. William Allen Zulker  
Christmas Eve, December 24, 1980  
First Presbyterian Church, Bridgeport, PA



Text: I Timothy 1:15 – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

It hardly seem possible – yet it is true – that Christmas is here –

- And if we did not yet get into the Christmas spirit, it is not the fault of the shop-owners, manufacturers, or store-keepers.

-They did a thorough job of telling us of all the things we needed to buy – either for ourselves or for others.

Furthermore, if we are not yet in the Christmas spirit, it is an indication that Christmas is certainly not dependent upon gaily-decorated trees, lighted homes and store windows animated by life-size mechanical figures. There seem to be more of these than ever before.

And though it may be contrary to the thinking of many people, Christmas is not dependent upon that red-clothed, bewhiskered old gentleman standing on a street corner ringing a bell – or who supposedly travels in a sleigh drawn by reindeer.

Now we might very well ask the question –

What would Christmas be like without a Christmas tree, or holly wreaths, or mistletoe?

Not even a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ would deny that each of these customs provides a desirable atmosphere for this joyous celebration.

Sure, it costs money to send Christmas cards – almost as much for the postage as for the card, - but how seldom it is that we take time to renew an old friendship that is so easily perpetuated through a Christmas card. And Hallmark did not ask me to say that!

Sometimes, people complain, saying that Christmas is too busy –

Too many gifts have to be given, - trees purchased and lighted, - cards sent, - homes decorated, - turkey and pies prepared for dinner, - and if we didn't do it, some would think us strange.

But suppose we were isolated from these customs – living in a area where we could do exactly as we pleased, without social pressures, what would we do then about Christmas?

Most likely, we would do exactly as we do now, and we would wonder why others didn't do it too!

MY FRIENDS,

As I face you today on this Christmas eve,

It is not my purpose to neither defend nor criticize these practices – RATHER – I want to suggest that as these customs are continued, that we all make certain that they do not supplant the more significant and indispensable requisites of Christmas.

As much as we all like the traditional festivities of Christmas,

And as much as we would hate to dispense with them, NEVERTHELESS, we must admit, that were they taken away, Christmas would yet remain –  
FOR CHRISTMAS IS AN EXPERIENCE OF THE HEART!

Let us then restate the significant, central factor of Christmas, lest even we in the Christian Church become victims of our celebration.

CHRISTMAS IS THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST THE SAVIOR!

IT IS THE BEGINNING OF A CREED,  
THE BIRTHDAY OF AN ERA AND A KING,  
THE INAUGURATION OF A CULTURE,  
THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF OUR HOPE!

Christmas marks the event when God in the person of his Son Jesus Christ came to earth in human form and entered into the experience of all who will believe.

As the Apostle Paul put it when he wrote to Timothy –

“This is a Faithful saying and Worthy of all Acceptation, Christ Jesus came into the world to Save Sinners.”

What a wonderful message Paul preached in so few words, how Simple, yet Profound!

**1.** May I point out to you that this verse speaks of the **Pre-existence of Jesus Christ**.

A unique characteristic to be sure.

Christ alone, entered this life - on this planet – with a purpose and a plan that He knew beforehand.

Not so with you or me. The purpose and plan of our lives, known before the foundations of the world by God, have been chosen for us without our opinions, disagreement or consent.

I can't help but think of the movie on the life of General George C. Patton, that modern day warrior of World War II.

He felt that he had lived before – in the long-ago-past, and that he had fought with the Carthaginians as well as with the Allied Forces in earlier wars.

But even he did not come to earth with a plan which he had chosen beforehand.

A man sat at lunch with me one day and told me that on each Christmas Day, he relives the crossing of the Delaware River by George Washington and the Revolutionary troops. He rows one of the boats while dressed in a Revolutionary uniform. He said that when he reads the historical plaques on the trails around Valley Forge, he hears the voices of the soldiers, the sounds of wood being chopped for the fires, and he smells the odors of a military encampment of 200 years ago.

But He DIDN'T LIVE BEFORE Creation, nor did he choose to enter this life.

But Christ, in his condescension, chose to become a man, so that man could become like Him.

Now, when John, the Apostle, wrote of Jesus, he said,

“He was the WORD” – THE EXPRESSION OF GOD

“In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God.”

The beginning was not Year One or Day One, neither was it the beginning of the Christian era. In fact, it was not even the beginning of Creation!

It goes far beyond that – to the beginning of all things, before worlds, or solar systems, or even space.

In the beginning, where there was only God, there was the WORD – Jesus Christ - and this significant truth is the basis of his redemptive work that follows.

2. - Secondly, the passage in First Timothy – 1:15 - refers to **Christ's Deity** just as John does in chapter 1 verse 2. of the Gospel account – “the WORD was God.”

Let's not overlook this truth. - How could Christ otherwise be able to accomplish his purpose “to save Sinners”?

Paul said that Christ came with an extraordinary, supernatural task or mission that could only be accomplished by one who also was supernatural.

It could not be the work of an ordinary man, for if one such ordinary person could do it, why then could there not be another. One exception to the rule leaves room for other exceptions.

But this was a Divine Mission, and He – Jesus – could do it because He was God!

A. - Note now that Jesus is called God in other Scriptures as well.

Titus Chapter Two, verse 13 – “Looking for that blessed Hope and the Glorious appearing of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

First John Chapter 5, verse 20 – “This [Jesus] is the true God and Eternal Life.’

B. – We also see that other Divine Names are ascribed to Jesus.

In the Book of the Revelation, Chapter 22, verse 13, He is called “The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

In the Book of Acts, Chapter 4, verse 33, Jesus is called “Lord.”

C. – Note too, that Divine Worship is ascribed to Jesus by Thomas in John Chapter 20, verse 28 – He said, “My Lord and My God.”

Matthew Chapter 14, verse 33 reads, “They that were in the ship, worshipped Him – [Jesus] saying, “Thou art the Son of God.”

In Luke Chapter 24, verse 52 we read, “They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

Now if you are worshipping Jesus Christ and do not acknowledge Him as God, then you are guilty of breaking the First Commandment of God Almighty who says, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”

CHRISTMAS, THEN, IS A REMINDER THAT JESUS IS GOD.

**3.** - Now our text does not stop with the consideration of Christ’s Pre-existence and of His Deity. It goes on to say that He became INCARNATE. Verse 15.

“He came into the world...” That is, He became flesh, just as John said in chapter 1, verse 14. **Both Paul and John agree on this fact.**

One translator put it this way – “Christ tabernacled in our midst.”

The Apostle Paul also told the Philippians that “Christ Jesus, existing in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.” Chapter 2, verses 6 and 7.

Today, I implore you to fix this all-important teaching upon your minds and your hearts. Let no one lead you astray from this significant truth by substituting anything less in its place.

To be sure, it is quite common to hear people speak of the greatness of Christ, or of his kindness and his example. Some remark about the Purity of his life and they picture him as simply a man who was elevated to a position of prestige and honor above all others.

But, my friends, the truth of the matter - as taught by Scripture - is this: He was not a man who became God. **THIS WAS GOD WHO BECAME A MAN!**

To deny this is to reject the only means of Salvation man has ever known or been offered.

Jesus was God – Incarnate – In the Flesh – He became a man – He walked and talked and worked like a man.

He ate and slept, grew weary, suffered pain and sorrow – He wept.

And He was tempted in all points – as we are – **YET WITHOUT SIN!**

**4.** – May I go further and say that this Incarnation characterizes Christ in His Voluntary Humility.

HE CHOSE TO Humble Himself – for us.

He stooped low to Earth – for the sake of Sinners.

And at Christmas – we who call ourselves Christian should take an introspective look.

Is there any such Humility within us?

Are the outcasts of Society – the objects of Our Love?

Are the poor and the needy, the recipients of our Gifts?

Or do we give only to those who can give in return?

This past week as I drove back from New Jersey on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, I passed the Sunday Breakfast Mission at 6<sup>th</sup> and Vine Streets in Philadelphia. I also drove by some very dejected-looking men, wandering on the streets, the victims of Sin – in despair and hopelessness.

As I thought of all that, I was reminded of a story about the Superintendent of the Bowery Mission in New York City.

Night after night, he saw one particular man who would stagger into the Mission, so drunk, he could hardly stand or even talk.

But always, the superintendent would speak to him of God's love and the power to redeem. He would give the man a meal and send him upstairs in the mission to bed. One night, his patience and sympathy ran out and when Scotty came to the mission door, the superintendent refused to let him in. He told Scotty that as long as he continued drinking he could stay away from the mission and go find someone else to help.

Later on that same night, the Superintendent couldn't sleep. He tossed and turned, and getting up, looked outside and saw it was snowing. Getting dressed, he left the Mission and went up and down one street after another until he finally found Scotty huddled together in a doorway trying to get warm. Looking up into the face of the Superintendent, Scotty asked, "What are you doing here?" He then heard the reply, "Scotty, I'm sorry about tonight, the way I acted, and what I said. Scotty, I want to tell you that I love you and want you to come stay in the Mission tonight."

Scotty replied, "You what? I didn't hear you." The superintendent again said, "I want you to know that I love you and I want you to come stay in the Mission."

Scotty said, "Sir, in all the times I've been in the Mission, you've never said that before. You've preached to me, you've told me that God loves me, you've said that Jesus died for me, but, you've never told me before that you love me and cared for me. Yes, sir, I'll come, I'll come."

My friends today, that is the kind of voluntary humility that Christ showed in coming to us. – in meeting us – in our sin and degradation. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

5. - Make no mistake, then, **HIS PURPOSE IS CLEAR** – He came to solve the supreme problem of the world – the problem of Sin

Sin is rebellion against God, - It is the attempt to live life as we please,

It is Selfishness – an egocentric way of life.

And what a paradox it is that the season of Celebrating Christ's Birth, so often becomes the occasion for more sin.

You may have said, Christmas isn't what it used to be, but why? Why isn't it like it used to be?

It may be, because we have forgotten that faithful saying and one that is worthy of all acceptance – "That Christ Jesus came into the world to save Sinners."

But to remember it – is to understand the reality of the truth.

That my friends, is what Christmas is all about.

Have you ever said:  
"O Holy Child of Bethlehem  
Descend to us we pray,  
Cast out our Sin and enter in,  
Be born in us today.

Why not say it now?