Lessons and Carols

Why do we celebrate Christmas? What is so important to the Church that we spend basically the entirety of December, sometimes more, repenting and preparing ourselves for Christmas? You see the blue upon the altar; you see the purple candles. These are the colors of expectation and repentance. This time of the Church year is a deeply important season in the life of the Christian. If you need a refresher, the Church is in Advent, which means "arrival." We are, here, anticipating the final arrival of Christ; when He returns to judge the World and rescue forgiven sinners from the destruction of heaven and earth. The *conclusion* of this season is Christmas. Christmas, the feast day when Christ's birth is celebrated, concludes the season of expectation and repentance.

We celebrate Christmas for the same reason that you heard the Israelites saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die." We celebrate Christmas for the same reason that God said to this, "what they have spoken is good." We celebrate Christmas for the same reason that the Shepherds, who you are about to hear about were terrified of God's angels. That reason is this: a world stained with sin, a human being conceived and born in sin, and a cosmos marred by sin, death, and evil cannot stand, it cannot exist, in the

presence of God.

When God created Adam and Eve, our first parents, all was right, all was good. Man had not strayed from God's will creation, which belonged to man, which was under his authority, remained it its edenic perfection. But, when Adam and Eve sinned and ate the apple, they cast not only themselves but all of creation onto a journey toward non-existence – they, in their actions, asked God to orphan them and took satan as their father. When God created and gave being to all that exists He poured Himself out into His creation so that all that exists does so in harmony with God's very nature. A sin, an act or desire taken outside of that created goodness is an act or desire of uncreation.

So, God who once walked with mankind in the garden became the most fearful thing to mankind. So much so, that our naked parents clothed themselves so that they might be hidden from God. Know this: that when the source of life descends from heaven to dwell with a creation that has chosen non-existence that source of life destroys creation. This is why God banished Adam and Eve from the garden. All of Eve's children then are as much children of uncreation as Adam and Eve themselves.

But, remember what Isaiah proclaimed: "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you," all the wrongs of this body and life will be righted, "the ransomed of the Lord

shall return, and come to Zion [God's dwelling place, not Zion Edgerton] with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

This is why we celebrate Christmas. The source of life and existence, God Himself descended from Heaven above, the heaven above the sky and space, to Earth in a form resembling a servant. Taking human flesh Christ Jesus the Word of God, the same Word that He spoke in creating the World, took on a form that man could see with eyes of flesh, hear with ears of flesh, and touch with hands of flesh; without fear, without pain, without destruction. That is why we celebrate Christmas. God is a destroying fire to those who are born in sin; Christ is a life giving servant to those who have no hope of life when God returns.

This is why the artist, who created the picture on the front of your bulletin, wrote over the baby Jesus: *Ha Logos,* which is translated: **The Word**.

The tree that Adam and Eve ate from in the garden, the tree that became our tree of death has been undone and destroyed in the death of Christ. Christ's Cross, where he died for you and for me, has become our tree of life. The fruit of that tree unites us, fallen, desperate, sinful man with the immortality, purity, and existence of God. Just as there were many who were appalled at Jesus' death there are many more who rejoice and are healed by that Death. They were appalled because he was so

beaten, whipped, scourged, and tortured that he barely resembled a human being when he was nailed to the tree.

Remember, again, what Isaiah foretold: “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was nailed for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We have access to the Father through Christ who took on flesh to unite the beauty and fullness of God with the flesh and lowliness of Man – He alone has the Words of God to deliver this reality to us.”

All of this Christ did on the Cross, taking the sins of the many upon himself and destroying them in His death. Making intercession for transgressors he gladly suffered the fate due all of creation by taking flesh, created flesh, and dragging it through death and the grave to be raised to life again on the other side of the Grave.

This is why we celebrate Christmas. The immortality, the purity, the beauty, the infinity of God took on the mortal, the impure, the ugly, and the finite. The Word of God took on human flesh, being born an infant that first Christmas morning, so that he could make his way to the Cross and provide for us a life lived like His own. No

longer separated from God but united. No longer a child of the earth but a child of heaven. No longer children of satan but children of God once again.

In the sacraments of the Church, in the preaching of Faith, Christ bestows on the Christian his very own flesh, blood, and spirit so that they may not be destroyed when they hear the voice of God nor see the fire of His presence, but rejoice in it, be glad in it, and live forever in that peace and joy. There is no darkness in Christ, only light. There is no death in Christ, only life. This he makes available to you, to have as your own, to live in, to love in, to die and rise in. There is no death for the Christian, only a passage from life to life – Christ has died for you and He dies no more.

The right to become Children of God is yours through Christ taking on flesh, reconciling God and mankind together in that mystical union of God and flesh. This is why we rejoice, this is why we sing. We have received this, we now possess this. Nothing can separate us from this, nothing can steal this away from us. This is why we celebrate Christmas: It is the beginning of our redemption, it is the conclusion of our struggle. In the incarnation of Christ all that is wanting, all that is lacking, all that is fearful or painful is destroyed. Illness, sin, death – these things cannot exist in the presence of Christ. And so, God in taking mankind into Himself through Christ does not destroy us but redeems us returning us to that original created splendor through the simplicity and ugliness of the servant, Christ, who suffers for us, in our place, and rises from the death with the self-same flesh he received from His mother. God bless

each and every one of you this Christmastide – may the Lord Jesus come quickly.

Amen.