

Genesis 1:1-5

John 1:1-14

Jan. 10, 2021

Life of Hope

Christmas has come and gone ... it was a bit different for many folks this year. Then last week we celebrated Epiphany, Jesus Christ revealed to the world. Both these holidays bring to us something we really need, especially in this year of 2021. They both bring hope. At Christmas I spoke about the powerful hope that our Savior's birth brings. The Incarnation is of powerful significance. **God in the flesh is the literal embodiment of hope.** All that had been hoped for by the O.T. prophets, what many of us hope for, has come in Jesus who is God with us.

Without hope we can hardly go on living. But knowing that God came to us, and miraculously still comes to us, and that the Almighty Creator of all that is, is Himself Emmanuel, God-With-Us, proves that the One who gave us life cares enough to continue giving life and to heal our brokenness and loss. Even more so, Christmas and the Incarnation are the true, real-life action of our Creator also being our Redeemer. ***For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross, Colossians 1:19-20.*** This truth has been revealed, not just to a small group, but to the entire world. It is no wonder, then, that **the three Magi** who traveled from foreign lands ... **fell to the ground and worshipped Him.**

The true and deep meaning of the Incarnation is this: God Himself became the created order. The sacred assumed all that is secular into Himself in order to redeem all for His new creation. The ancient church taught, "only that which is assumed can be redeemed." In other words, through the incarnation, God took up into Himself the entire creation, so that **the creation redeemed by God Himself can be made new**, and ready to glorify God. We're right in the middle of a second act of creation, the making of a new man and new woman, and the redemption of the whole of creation. **Our Redeemer's work is to reverse the effects of sin in our lives and all of creation.**

From The Beginning

Have you noticed how John's Gospel echoes the story of creation in Genesis? Both begin with these words: ***In the beginning...*** God's first command was ***Let there be light... and God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness, Gen. 1:3-4.*** John says, ***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...*** and then ***The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world, John 1:5&9.***

Genesis tells how God creates by His word, at every step God said... John's Gospel says of Jesus: ***He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made, John 1:2-3.*** God's acts of creation culminate in life: ***Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures ... Let the earth bring forth living creatures...*** Gen.1:20 & 24. John's Gospel tells us, ***In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind, John 1:4.*** All this to say that **Jesus was with God in such a way that He is God.**

Why these parallels between Genesis and John? How is the beginning of time linked to the birth and life of Christ? Well, **God made all things**, and this John acknowledges, **but all things are not the way God made them.** Though God separated the light from the darkness, darkness still creeps in and seeks to smother the light. In the beginning God brought order out of the chaos, but chaos is always on the edge waiting to make a comeback. God created rocks and humans make weapons from them. God made all plants and humans make deadly drugs from them. In the beginning God created and in the end humans desecrated. A new beginning was necessary. That's the link with Christmas and Epiphany. **Because God loves what He created, He has sent His Word in the flesh to remake the world.**

New Creation

Obviously, the world hasn't yet been remade and that's because there's a lot of resistance. Many people like life just the way it is ... or they come up with their own plans to make life better. But God is no quitter! **He is still about His work and has yet to finish what He began in Jesus Christ.** That's good news! We still have time to get in on the new creation of the world. We still have time to receive Him whose own we are. ***... to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God...* John 1:12.** Children born anew, not of blood or human will but born anew of God's Spirit. And those who are not busy being born are busy dying. *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed, Romans 8:19. As the desecration of God's creation began with one man (Adam) ... For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice... so shall its renewal and consecration come through one man – the One who was both man and God, Redeemer and Creator.*

The new creation passes through you and me, and one by one through all who will receive Him **... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay** and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole the creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to fulfill God's life-giving glory.

All Creation Testifies to God

God gives life to all living things and **nature itself continually seeks to glorify the life from God.** A few years ago I read a little book titled, *The Outermost House*. It's a collection of author Henry Beston's reflections on his year living at the family beach house on the eastern most stretch of the Massachusetts shore. I was captivated by his observation of the teeming thousands of salmon running from the sea up one of the streams that flow to the ocean. He writes: "I began to reflect on Nature's eagerness to sow life everywhere, to fill the planet with it, to crowd with it the earth, the air, and the seas. Into every corner, into all forgotten things and nooks, Nature struggles to pour life, pouring life into the dead, life into life itself. That immense, over-whelming, relentless, burning ardency of Nature for the stir of life! And all these her creatures, ever as these thwarted lives, what travail, what hunger and cold, what

bruising and slow-killing struggle will they not endure to accomplish the earth's purpose? And what conscious resolution of men can equal their impersonal, their congregated will to yield self life to the will of life universal?"¹

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse, Romans 1:20. We all lament death, some fear death, but do we all choose life? What travail, what privation, what bruising and slow-killing struggles will we endure to bring forth the new life, the new creation we have in Christ?

God Humiliated – Humanity Exalted

The Incarnation - ***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, John 1:14.*** A number of years ago I read some comments on this by Pastor Karl Beck.² He described how the Word that was God, was given something it never had before – that is, human form, “the Word became flesh.” At the same time, humanity received the gift of divinity, something it never had before. To those ***... who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1:12-13.*** Indeed, Christmas and creation are connected: **God has been born of a human, and this made it possible for humans to be born of God.** Emmanuel means God participates in what we are. Through faith in Christ, we can participate in what God is. God was willing to be humiliated by allowing His glorious splendor to be contained in human flesh. Yet it was for a grand and noble purpose: by hosting God, allowing God to dwell among us, the race of humanity can be exalted, lifted into God's glory. **That which is assumed into God can be redeemed by God.**

Please do not confuse this with notions of becoming gods, such as espoused by Mormonism or New Age spirituality. There is still a clear distinction between Creator and creature. To grasp at becoming like God was in the beginning and still is the first sin the fountainhead of all sin.³ But **it is a different thing altogether to be invited by God Himself to participate in the new creation;** and it is a miracle when we accept that invitation.

You've heard the old saying, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Here's one case where that's reversed: in Jesus, God gives us Himself. God does all the giving, and **our blessing comes from receiving the One who has been given.** A new birth in a Bethlehem stable long ago began the rebirth of all creation and offers to each of us the opportunity to be born again. Recall, **we're either busy being born anew, or we're busy dying.**

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth, John 1:14.

Seeing His glory, seeing Him for who He is, brings the touch of His grace and truth. His touch rejuvenates all things and by His touch we are born anew. And that, my friends, is what hope is made of.

¹Henry Beston, (New York, NY; St. Martin's Press, 1988), 164.

²Karl Beck, *Pastor Karl's Rookie Year* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 118.

³Ibid, 119.