

✠ Luke 2:1-20 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

It is quite interesting that in this season that is surrounded by and inundated with talk of angels, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, God, and all things holy, that what is not usually brought to mind is heaven. We don't often think of heaven during the Christmas season, except that the Son of God came down from heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary.

But that is the way with God. He is not satisfied to merely tell you; He must show you. He doesn't merely want to tell you that your sins are forgiven, that you are redeemed; He shows you that you are redeemed, saved from your sins. He pours water over your head and feeds you His Son's body and blood. He speaks to you through His Church, forgiving your sins and giving you life. He doesn't lie around collecting dust or getting lost, He is living and active and He seeks you.

Neither does He simply tell you what heaven is like, He shows you. And He does not show you in the depression of funerals nor even in the gaiety of weddings. He shows you what heaven is like in the birth of His Son, the child born of the virgin.

On the night when our Jesus was born heaven was indeed on earth. The angels that stood around the great throne of God went to where their God was, a stable in Bethlehem. They did not understand these things, but they knew who it was that was born to Mary and given to Joseph. They did what they always do, and do even now. They gave their angelic voices over to singing the praises of God.

But this time their hearers were not the company of heaven, but the company of the sheep. Shepherds in the fields of Judea heard the voices of archangels and angels. They could not contain themselves. Behold, unto is born this day in the city of David a Savior! What joy! What rejoicing! What glad tidings! Do not fear, but be of great joy.

We angels do not know what it is like to have God become an angel, but you, o man, you are highly favored, for the Lord is with you. He is among you. He is one of you. He has lifted you up above our angelic office and gives you what He gives no other: Himself.

Thus did they sing glory to God in the highest whilst God rested in a lowly manger, and peace on earth for where God is, there peace is.

So also, where God is, there heaven is. Heaven is not God's house, as if God could be contained, rather heaven is the highest human description of what it is like to be in the presence of God. In the presence of God the angels sing. In the presence of God people kneel. In the presence of God there is, perfect peace, perfect faith, perfect love.

When God became man, being born of the Blessed Virgin, He deigned to bring heaven to her womb. He saw fit to bring heaven to Bethlehem, to a stable. He desired to bring heaven to Joseph and to the shepherds and even to Herod who would kill the infant witnesses of the Christ.

And so He desires to bring heaven to you. Not in hallmark cards and season's greetings, but in the One born of the virgin, the One wrapped in the clothing of humanity, the One to

whom angels sing and anthems ring; the One who is descended of David yet is before all things and Creator of all things.

It is not enough for God to tell you, He desires to show you. He desires to show you that He loves you by taking on your humanity. The Ancient of Days becomes an Infant. The One who sits on the throne of majesty lies in a manger. The One who is clothed with majesty and glory wears swaddling clothes. He who cannot be touched nor seen is held by His mother and seen by all. He who nourishes all living things now takes nourishment from His mother's breast.

But this is the way of God. He calls what is not as though it were. He humbles the proud and exalts the lowly. He foils the plans of Herod while bringing simple shepherds to see His Christ. He breaks the bonds of sin by becoming sin. He kills death by dying. He gives life by pouring out His blood. He makes alive by drowning. He shows what heaven is like by coming to earth. And Mary pondered all these things in her heart.

And now God is on earth and man is in heaven. And He ponders you in His heart. Not as though you are an enigma to Him, but as you are His beloved. He has unwrapped the swaddling clothes of the Old and New Testaments and has revealed Himself to you. His messengers call out to you, fear not for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy that will be for all people. Come, come to the manger where your Savior rests in chalice and paten. Come to where He is, for there is peace and goodwill.

Do not think to yourself that you will ascend to heaven, but rejoice that God has descended to you to bring you with Him to where He is. That is the story of Christmas. God journeys to where you are, becoming as you are, so that you may go to where He is, becoming as He is: righteous and holy.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠