

Sermon Transcript for Christmas Day, 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right. So I'm not sure what you may be expected to have been read on Christmas Day, but these don't exactly talk about the Christmas story and the birth of Jesus Christ, at least not directly. John is indeed talking about Jesus coming to earth, but he doesn't tell us about Mary, or the shepherds, or the stable or anything like that. He just goes into a philosophical discussion of who this person is that was born and became flesh and dwelt among us. But for us to get a full understanding of who it is that did come on that Christmas morning, some 2000 years ago, we really need to go back all the way into Exodus to kind of figure out who it is that we're talking about. And that's why we have this narrative of Moses building the tabernacle and getting the tabernacle all ready.

Now the tabernacle, if you're not familiar with it was where the ark of the covenant dwelt while they were traveling around in the wilderness. And before the temple was finally built with King David and King Solomon. So it traveled around in this tent and God had prepared the exact structure for how it was supposed to be put. And as with the temple, there was a place where the ark was set and there was a screen that separated the ark from everybody else. And no one could enter into that ark, not even Moses. Now remember, Moses is the one who saw God, the glory of God on the mountain, when he received the 10 commandments. He asked God to show him His glory and God said, okay. He put him in a crack in the mountain and then He passed by and Moses saw the very trailing or the tail end of His glory. And that was so great, and marvelous, and powerful that Moses from that day forward had a face that had, because it had seen the glory of God, even a brief, very tail end of the reflection of God, because he had seen the reflection of God, his face shown with the glory of God so much so that nobody could look at him for his entire life from that moment on. He had to wear a veil over his face to cover himself because the glory of God was just too much for anyone to handle. Even a reflection of the glory was too much. And so here we have this ark that is placed in there and a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Can you imagine camping with all of your buddies in the nation of Israel and there's this massive pillar of fire, talk about a bonfire and this massive pillar of fire right above the tabernacle, where the ark of the covenant resided.

Now you notice, they said they put the ark in and then they put the mercy seat on the ark and put it into that Holy of Holies, that special place where no one can enter. What is the mercy seat? The mercy seat is the place where on one day out of the year, the day of atonement, the high priest, the only one that could enter and he could only enter that one day, would enter into this Holy of Holies and take the blood sacrifice, the sin offering of the people and he would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. And God in His mercy would accept the offering of blood and not count the sins of the Israelites against them for that year. He would cover their sins. They were not gotten rid of yet, but they were covered so that God would not look at them. And He would not judge the Israelites based on them because their sins were poured out on that mercy's seat through the blood of the sacrifice.

And this is where God in the Old Testament showed His grace and prepared the people for the sacrifice that would come. That would not just cover the sins of humanity, but would wipe them out. That would get rid of them. That would forgive them. But it changes from the temple, and the ark, and the mercy seat to the very person of Jesus Christ. He becomes the place where God dwells. He becomes the person through whom we have connection with God. No longer is it the Holy of Holies and the mercy seat, which is covered and hidden

from all of us. But no, the temple curtain is torn in two, and now we have access to that mercy seat. And that mercy seat is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so that is what we're talking about when we talk about the baby Jesus being born in Bethlehem in a manger. It's not just a cute story about an amazing situation of events that brought this young child to Bethlehem. It's about the Son of God, true God. The one through whom all things were created. This God chose to humble Himself to be a little five, six, seven, eight pound baby. The glory of God, the God who created the universe is somehow contained in an infant. I don't know how that works. All I know is that God said it is. And this infant is more than just a child. He is the Word of God. And this Word then became flesh for us, for His glory and for our hope, because we need the mercy and the grace of God. What does it talk about, grace upon grace was given to us. It is this idea that we found in the introit that God's grace is upon grace, upon grace, multitudes of grace.

See, God does not think it's sufficient for Him to tell us just once that He loves us and that He forgives us our sins, because He knows we're fickle creatures. We often forget and we live lives that don't act as if we are forgiven. We continue to sin. We continue to rebel against the Word of God, even though we might not want to, we do it anyway. We're fickle creatures and we need to be reminded over, and over, and over again that He loves us and that we are forgiven by Him. And because we are forgiven by Him, we have the hope of forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

So He gives us grace by sending His Word as an infant to bear our sins. He gives us grace by connecting us to that sacrifice in our baptisms. He gives us more grace by giving us His body and blood in the Lord's supper and the forgiveness of sins. And more grace by the Word written, given to us and more grace by the proclamation that our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ and more grace, and more grace, and more grace. It's as if God cannot contain His desire to show His love for us.

And He wants us to know that. Unless we think that we have in some way earned or deserved this, we have here in Timothy, that the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared and He saved us. Why? Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy. You hear that? Mercy. Think again of the mercy seat of God in the Old Testament. God showing His mercy to the Israelites and not counting their sins against them. And now through Jesus Christ, He shows His mercy by not just not counting our sins against us, but He shows His mercy by getting rid of our sins, crucifying them on the cross and wiping them away from our credit and giving them as far as the east is from the west where they shall never meet again. And we are free through the washing of regeneration, that baptism that we have been given and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, the strengthening of our hearts and our minds, which He poured out richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

So we have this celebration, these lights, these ornaments, these flowers, these candles, the presents and the pageantry and everything that goes on during this Christmas season. We have all of this as a simple reminder that this is nothing compared to the marvelous gift of an infant baby born in Bethlehem, who is Christ our Lord, our Savior. Who is not just our Savior, but who is also our God, who came and dwelt among us. The God of the universe, the one who created all things, knows what it means to live a life where there's struggle, and hardship, and pain, and disease. He knows the hardship of human life for He lived it with us. And He gives all of us, because he was human, He gives all of us as humans, the hope and the confidence that just as He was raised from the dead, so also shall we. And we will live with Him in His glory and majesty for all eternity.

And you think these lights are beautiful. Just imagine what it's going to be like when Christ comes again in His glory, and we get to dwell with Him in the new heavens and the new earth, which He has prepared for us to live for all eternity, with joy and thanksgiving in our hearts. What a blessed day that will be. We thank God for His first coming. And we look forward with joy and anticipation to His second.

May the grace and mercy and peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be and abide with you always, this Christmas day, now and forever more unto life everlasting. Amen.