

Christmas Day, December 25, 2005, Liturgical Year "B"

St. Bartholomew's Church in the Town of Tonawanda, N.Y

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins, Curate

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20, Isaiah 9:2-4,6-7

"Jesus, Prince of Peace"

Jesus- Prince of Christmas-Prince of Peace

Scripture tells us that Jesus is our Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 says: *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Today, I want to share with you from the Gospel of Luke - chapter 2; the story of the birth of Jesus. His birth – the birth of the Prince of Peace has truly transformed our entire world.

I. Jesus' birth changed our separation from God and brought us hope:

As a result of the fall in the garden, man has been separated from God. There has been a great divide between God and man. Jesus came into the world to bridge the gap – the great divide between God and man.

- It is Jesus who brought us **redemption** – Ephesians 1:7 – *"In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."* By Jesus coming into the world he brought the remedy: redemption. Without redemption, there would still be this huge chasm, separation, between God and man. But through the sacrifice of Christ's own blood - the way has been made for us through His loving grace.
- Jesus ushered in **reconciliation** – Romans 5:11 – *"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."* Through His death - Jesus reunited us to God.
- Jesus restored our **relationship** with God – Jesus made things right! He restored a right relationship between God and us. Without His sacrifice and shed blood there would not have been forgiveness of sins and there would not have been any relationship whatsoever.

But I want you to know this morning that **God wanted the relationship restored more than we did.** Even while we were still sinners the Bible says that Christ died for us.

I want you to know this morning that the arrival of Jesus Christ was a blessed result of the great love of God to restore a fallen humanity with its creator. This was all a part of the great plan of God that was carried out just for you and me.

II. Jesus' birth changed our status with God and brought us closer to Him:

Before His birth, death and atonement we were dependant upon the priest to go into the temple to make intercession and atonement for us, on our behalf.

As a result of what Christ did we now have full and open access to God through Christ and we can now come freely into His presence (Hebrews 10:19-22). Remember - the Temple veil was torn in two when Christ breathed His last breath – on Good Friday.

And so we ourselves can enter into the Holy of Holies – into a relationship with God Himself.

1. John 15:15 reminds us that we have gone from being a slave to becoming a friend of Almighty God.

The relationship went from one where we were enslaved to the law and to our being totally lost to one of redemption, reconciliation and then to friendship.

You see the reason we were created is for us to be in fellowship with God, and to Glorify Him. It was in God's plan all along. But when humanity sinned the relationship was severed - the relationship was

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fractured. Nothing that mankind could do could restore it. Just one thing could put things right. As a result of Jesus' birth - the relationship was restored and we can now have a friendship with God.

2. We went from being a nobody to becoming a royal priesthood – Listen to these words from the Apostle Peter: *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)

My beloved brothers and sisters, before Christ came we were just a bunch of nobodies – we were basically "on the outside looking in." Through Christ's birth, death and resurrection - we are now a somebody! We have been adopted as heirs to His Kingdom.

We are men and women undeserving of the goodness and grace of God. We have been brought in by the blood of Christ, forgiven and restored. **Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians:** *"God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child - then also an heir, through God."* (Galatians 4:4-7)

Who you are in Christ far outweighs who you are without Him! I want you to know today that Christ's coming into the world and through His provisions, eternally changed your status with God. No longer are we strangers and aliens with God, now we are His family! On our own we could never rise up to the heights that He has taken us to. We could never earn it, attain it, accomplish it; only through His provision can we do it. But He has made it all possible for us today! He has changed our status with God – by being born to Mary – in a stable in Bethlehem.

III. Jesus' birth changed our sufficiency to God - (Built us up)

His birth opened for us a new and dynamic relationship through which we now find our sufficiency totally in Christ.

You see -before the birth of Christ – humanity was in a struggle; a struggle to measure up, to be self-sufficient, to not have to rely upon others, such as the priest for access to God. But **through Jesus Christ that has now all changed**. His has reconciled us unto himself and now we can find our sufficiency in God through Christ.

The Good News: Christ is sufficient!

1. Sufficient for life and godliness – 2 Peter 1:3

"His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

Through the power of Christ living in your life - He has given you everything you need to live a life of godliness, holiness and peace.

2. Sufficient for health and healing – Isaiah 53:4-5

"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...and by his wounds we are healed." Through His death and resurrection He has provided for us health and healing.

3. Sufficient for power and the ability to overcome – Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my

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witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The birth of Christ truly has transformed the world as we know it. We need to understand that the peace that Jesus is the Prince of is not the peace between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East – or between the Coalition Forces and the Insurgents in Iraq.

As a matter of fact: since the beginning of recorded history, the entire world has been at peace less than eight percent of the time! In its study, the periodical discovered that of 3530 years of recorded history, only 286 years saw peace. Moreover, in excess of 8000 peace treaties were made--and broken.

The peace that Jesus is Prince of is the peace between mankind and God Almighty – bridging the gap that sin put there – reconciling, restoring and redeeming; making it possible for us to have that relationship with God once again. **It is through the Birth of Christ that we have received the peace that surpasses all understanding.** Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is there with you always. Safety consists not in the absence of danger but in the presence of God.

Unfortunately - the way some people look at Christmas hasn't changed. Many look at it through the eyes of materialism, **getting instead of giving.**

It's been said that:

- If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.
- If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.
- If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.
- If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.
- **But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior!**

This Christmas season I pray that you don't miss the true meaning of Christmas; all of the wonderful things that **Christ has done for you** as a result of His birth. May each of you enjoy a Blessed Christmas!