

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Tonight we celebrate the fulfilment of a Promise, a Promise that your first parents had. In the midst of the condemnation of the first sin, mid-sentence in delivering the death sentence to all men born of human father, while cursing the serpent for eternity, God made a Promise, the Promise of a Son, a Son born of Eve, a Son born miraculously, who would save the world from sin. Adam and Eve trusted in that Promise. They were saved from their sin by faith in the Coming One. God would provide the necessary covering by sacrifice.

And then to them a son was born. But Cain wasn't the Child of Promise, although his name reflects their belief that he was. Another son was born to them. But Abel wasn't the Promised One either. It wasn't Noah, although the world was saved through him. It wasn't Shem, Ham or Japheth, although they are the fathers of all the living.

It wasn't Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, who all believed the Promise and worshipped the Coming Son. It wasn't one of the twelve brothers born of four mothers. It wasn't Moses or Joshua, although the Savior would be like them. It wasn't David or Solomon, nor their sons, although the Savior would be their Son and their Lord. Decades and centuries and millennia came and went, and countless generations passed, as the faithful awaited the Promised Savior, the One who would free men from sin and death.

And so it was, thousands of years later, in the fulness of time, when a distant son and daughter of Judah were compelled to return to Bethlehem by a murderous Gentile ruler, that the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. God kept His promise. The Seed promised to Adam and Eve was born. The Hope of the Generations was brought forth from the woman God foreknew in Eden. Mary had gotten a Man, the Lord. Thanks be to God! The long-awaited Savior is born!

The night skies were torn open, the bright angelic host erupted in Divine praise, announcing that this Child is the Glory of God Incarnate, proclaiming "Glory to God in the Highest..." That glory, God's glory, the Glory of God made Man, was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. It is that miracle, that great Gift of God, that we celebrate this night – the birth of the Christ Child.

For there, in the House of Bread, in a feeding trough, in the first Paten, was laid the Infant Bread of Life Incarnate, that whoever eats His Flesh and drinks His Blood has eternal life, and He will raise you up at the Last Day. For he who eats His Flesh and drinks His Blood abides in Him, and He in you. That is the Gift of Christmas – remission from sin and eternal life by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem.

His alone is the Seven-Fold Name that is above every name, the Child born to us, the tangible, swaddled Proof of your peace with God, and His goodwill towards you. For it was not the shepherds keeping watch alone that walked in darkness. The fields outside of Bethlehem were not the only land in the shadow of death.

All men who fall short of perfect holiness live out their lives in the shadow of death. Everyone who breaks any of the Commandments of God dwell in darkness. And that darkness, according to the curse of Eden, is eternal.

Gift giving and card exchanges and family dinners will not free you from the curse. Nor will observing Christmas. Nor will agreeing that the birth of the Christ Child is an historic fact, although it is an historic fact.

The world mocks the account of St. Luke as a fable, as a wild baseless wives' tale crafted centuries after the fact to placate misled men whose religion is based on ancient superstition. There was no room for Him at the inn. There is still no room for Him today. And the ancient curse still stands. And if you have sinned, and you have sinned, you are under that dark curse.

The curse still stands. But so does the Promise. So you who dwelt in darkness, to you has come the Great Light. Upon you the Light has shined. And by that Light, you believe. So this dark night, as we celebrate the Holy Birth of our Savior, that Light shines. Our joy is increased. For the rod of the oppressor has been broken, the burden of his yoke is removed.

The Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. He has appeared in the Prophets' Words and in Mary's womb. He has appeared in Bethlehem in the manger. He has appeared that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a special people. But that He did not do in Bethlehem, although it began there.

Your redemption, your purification, was not won by the Babe of Bethlehem. It was won by the Man of Golgotha, by the Crucified One, by the Lifeless One placed in the garden tomb. It was won by the Living Lord, the Risen Christ, who crushed the serpent's head, who defeated the ancient enemy, who defeated death, who Himself took up a life that cannot be taken away. Believing in Him, the ancient curse is broken, and you are reconciled to God.

That is the fulfillment of the Promise of Eden. He is the fulfillment of the Promise of Eden. He is the fulfillment of all Prophecy. He is the source of your joy, true joy, Christmas joy. He is the source of your peace, peace with God. And He is the concrete, tangible sign of God's good will toward men – God made Man, God Enfleshed, God crucified, God dead and buried, God risen and ascended; God manifest, yes, in the manger, but more, God manifest on the cross and from the empty tomb.

For there does the Grace of God bring salvation to all men. There does your God and Savior Jesus Christ give Himself for you, that He might redeem you from every lawless deed, and purify you for Himself as His special people. Glory to God in the highest! And on earth peace, goodwill toward men! The Christ is born!

It is in Christ that you live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age. It is believing in Him that your sins are forgiven. It is hearing His Word that strengthens your faith. It is the Baptism that He gives that brings you the life He won. And it is the Church's feeding trough, the Paten, in which He is laid this night.

He fills the Chalice with His shed Blood, that His long-promised redemption be poured into you. He makes this Christ Mass your Christmas Feast. And this shall be a sign to you – you shall find your Savior swaddled in bread and wine, which bring you tidings of great joy, which bring the Christ born in Bethlehem to you, your Light on this dark night. And with you the angelic host rejoices, for in Holy Communion you are joined to them, to Christ, and to the Church of the ages.

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her Firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger.” Thanks be to God, for unto us a Son is born!

A blessed Christmas!

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