

## **An Extraordinary Visitation**

It is the season of Advent and we have been preparing our hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ. We have taken our text from Psalm 8:4 **“What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Psalm 8:4** We focused first upon this extraordinary visit and what it meant for God to become man and dwell among us, to visit us as the Psalmist declared. Then last Sunday we focused upon this extraordinary visitor and who he is as the exact image of God and the radiance of his glory. This morning I want us to focus upon this extraordinary visitation and what was accomplished through his coming to visit us. Above all, I hope we can capture part of the true message of Christmas. This is what Christmas is all about.

What was the purpose in the visitation? Why did God become a man and dwell among us? Let me share several reasons with you this morning.

**1. His visitation revealed the Father to us.** We have made this point repeatedly, but allow me to emphasize it one more time. The bible declares, **“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” John 1:18.** Jesus revealed the Father to us. In fact, he showed us a new aspect of God, a new possibility and dimension in our relationship with God. Jesus repeatedly spoke of God as Father. This was not something that was done by the Jewish people. By doing so Jesus revealed a new dimension of God’s personality and character to us – that of our Heavenly Father. God wants to have a Father - child relationship with all that would believe and be reconciled to the Father through the Son. John 1:12 declares, **“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God... John 1:12.**

Jesus revealed a brand new understanding of God as Father. Bear in mind that the Jewish people had such respect for God they would not pronounce or even write his name. It is still that way today. The orthodox will not speak or write the covenant name of God that he spoke to Abraham and Moses. They will only refer to him as *ha’shem*, “the name”. Many will not even write the word “God.” They will spell it G-d. They have taken great pains to preserve the holiness of God’s name and we too should honor and revere his name. But understand Jesus came to reveal to us that this awesome, mighty, holy and sacred God, also wants to be known as our loving *Abba*, Father.

**2. His visitation satisfied the requirements of justice and the law.** I realize justice and law don't exactly make the cut when you think of Christmas. They are way below Santa Claus and snowmen and animated television specials. Even nativity scenes and peace on earth comes way before the thought of justice and law, but the truth is, there can be no peace on earth apart from satisfying the demands of justice and the law.

God created us, set boundaries and approved behavior, explained those boundaries and behaviors to us, clearly established the rules and told us the penalty for breaking the rules. He asked if we understood and would we accept the rules and we agreed. We knew that the wages of sin is death and that the soul that sins must die. We knew that blessing came with obedience and death came with disobedience. And then we went right out and disobeyed, breaking his rules and laws and sinning against God. Everyone of us. And the law and justice required death for all of us that sinned by breaking God's law (again – that's all of us). Our death as sinners and law breakers would be fair and right and just.

We hear people say "God's not fair" or "It's not fair that something bad happened to that person." You're right, if God was fair and if life was fair, then we would all be judged and we would all die and go to hell because we've all sinned and broken God's rules and laws. That would be fair, wouldn't it?

God sent the law through Moses to show us what fair looks like. (John 1:17). Through the law we learned how messed up we truly were. We discovered what sin was and that we were all sinners, in rebellion against God and the life he wanted for us. The law told us about the justice that was demanded, that was required by a righteous God and a moral universe. The law told us about what would truly be fair and right – to carry out the prescribed justice. But this extraordinary visitation, the coming of Christ showed us something new. Look at John 1 again. **"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:17**

Christ's coming, his extraordinary visitation, is about justice and mercy and grace. Christmas is ultimately about God sending his Son into the world to bear the just penalty of sin for us! Christ's sinless life and sacrificial death satisfied the requirements of the law as he received the punishment due all of us. The demands of justice were met as he took our place and bore the penalty for our sins. Then out of his incredible

mercy and grace, he declared us to be righteous, forgiven, redeemed. We who had been lawbreakers, every one of us, by his mercy and grace, He pardoned us, forgave us, treated us as though we had never sinned. Out of his great love, God made us his sons and daughters and called us his very own. Oh what incredible mercy, what extraordinary love, what amazing grace that has been shown to us. What is the son of man that you would visit us? Friends, you've never been loved like this before. This is God's extreme love shown to us through Christ. How could anyone reject such love and mercy? He has come to visit you. Open your heart and life to Christ and receive him today.

**3. His visitation revealed in open fashion God's wondrous plan of grace.** From the beginning of time God had been planning and pointing to this visitation. Through symbols and mysteries, through types and shadows, through prophets and kings, God had been pointing to a day when his kingdom would break in upon the kingdom of this world. He pointed to a day when not only Israel but the nations – all people – would be included in his kingdom and would walk in his ways. There are so many examples in the Old Testament pointing to this extraordinary visitation. **“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [God with us].” Isaiah 7:14.**

**“...in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan – the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace..” Isaiah 9:1-6.**

Everything pointed to this extraordinary birth and the coming of the Messiah. And it wasn't just the coming of the Jewish Messiah, but he would be the Savior of the world. He was coming for all of us. So John tells us **“His own did not receive him...Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:11-12**

Paul refers to this as **“...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is**

## **Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27**

The mystery Paul refers to is that God wasn't just bringing salvation to the Jews, but to the whole world, to all who would believe and receive his offer of salvation and eternal life through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. You think you've been waiting a long time for Christmas to arrive? Consider this: A plan conceived in the heart of God before the foundations of the world began, to redeem his people, his creation, from their sin and guilt and shame and death – and the time has finally arrived. It had been a long wait, a long time coming, but finally: He's here. Immanuel is here, God with us. He has visited us and has redeemed us from sin and death.

Imagine the plan of grace. A baby, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Think of the months of waiting, developing, God becoming flesh in the womb of a young girl. The words of an old gospel song we sang last Wednesday night come to mind: “O the love that drew salvation's plan, oh the grace that brought it down to man, oh the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.” It wasn't just at Calvary, it began at Bethlehem. He spanned that gulf and came to visit us in order to bring redemption and salvation to all of us who were lost and waiting in darkness and bondage. What a plan for salvation, not just for the Jews but for all the people. The angel said, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11 This extraordinary visitation is good news for all of us. God's redemption plan is no longer hidden, no longer a mystery we have to try to decipher, no longer trying to discern the shadows and symbols – it is made plain as God our Savior is born in Bethlehem. Christ the Savior is born.

**4. His visitation brought reconciliation between God and man.** We sing the great Christmas Carol “Hark the Herald Angels Sing.” It includes that line, “God and sinners reconciled.” That's what Jesus accomplished at Calvary and that's what began at his birth in Bethlehem. To be reconciled means the offense has been dealt with and removed. Two parties are no longer at odds but have been restored to their original understanding and relationship. The hostilities have ended.

From Adam and Eve's sin in the garden forward until today, sin has been separating us from God and has been the source of the hostilities between us. It cut us

off from a relationship with God. In fact, Romans 5 says before Jesus came and died for us, we were enemies of God. **“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” Romans 5:10-11.**

We were enemies of God, at odds with him and living in rebellion to God and his commands. Jesus came to offer himself as a sacrifice so that the sin, the root issue that separated us from God, could be dealt with and removed. We were separated from God by our sinful nature and our sinful actions. But through Christ the sin that separated us has been washed away and we have been reconciled to God. The offense has been taken away. The Scripture says, **“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

If we are in Christ then we are new creations. The wrath of God is no longer aimed at us for our sins because Jesus bore that wrath in our place. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ. He is announcing to the world the good news of Christ and has given us that same message to share with others. “Come home and be reconciled to God, your heavenly Father. The source of separation - the sore spot of sin has been dealt with. Receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord and you won’t have to be at war anymore, instead you will become a child of God. Stop fighting against him and come and be reconciled, be reunited with your Heavenly Father. Accept His terms of peace and be saved.

Some of you are still fighting a war with God and with yourself and you aren’t even certain as to why. Surrender to Jesus and be healed and restored and reconciled to God and then you can even be reconciled to others in your life. Reconciliation starts

with you and Jesus as you come to him in faith. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.

**5. His visitation brought peace.** Paul says we Gentiles were foreigners and aliens, without God and without hope, but Jesus came to give us hope, to give to us his peace. Again, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not just the Jews. Through Christ we are reconciled to God and to one another and we can have His peace. We may still have troubles and problems in life, but we can face each one with the confidence that his peace will overshadow us, his peace will sustain us and keep us and guide us. His peace will serve as the referee in our hearts. He assured us of the peace that passes understanding. It is a peace that comes from knowing that God is not angry with me because I am in Christ. My sins have been forgiven and I am a new creation in him.

It's interesting that the prophet Isaiah said his name would be called "the prince of Peace." The angels announced "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:14. Jesus came to bring peace where only strife and discord had been known. Receive his peace today.

Christmas. An extraordinary visitation that revealed the Father to us, that satisfied the requirements of justice and the law, that revealed in plain fashion God's amazing plan of redemption, that reconciled us to God and brought us peace. That's a merry Christmas right there. No wonder the angel said, "**Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.**" A savior is born – Christ the Lord. Have you made him your Savior and Lord? Have you been reconciled to God? Is the war over and have you experienced his peace? All of this is available to you if you will open your heart and come to him in repentance and faith. It's why he came. Believe and receive by faith.