

## **An Extraordinary Visitor**

Last Sunday we read from Psalm 8 that asked “what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you would visit him.” We talked about this extraordinary visit, that Christ came to be with us, and some of the reasons for that visit: to reveal the Father to us, to establish a relationship with us, to care for us, to show his love for us in the most dramatic way, by giving his life for us that we might have eternal life through Christ.

We talked too about the problems inherent in his coming. It required what we called condescension. He had to come down to our level. He was and is the eternal one, spanning time and space, eternally existent in the past, present and future, yet he willingly and lovingly limited himself to 33 years in time to visit us and to bring redemption to us. The one who fills all time and transcends all time, the one who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, for a moment, laid aside that “eternalness” and was born in time to be among us! What an extraordinary visit and what an extraordinary visitor. So, let’s talk about this one who sacrificed so much to come and be born among us. What do we know about him?

Most of you know that as part of my graduate work at OSU back in the 1980's I studied the development of the concept of God in children. My only question was to ask children to draw a picture of what they thought God looked like. I got all kinds of pictures. K4 and 5 – 6<sup>th</sup> grade. “Here is God flying a kite, here is his reindeer and here is his rat.” (Brightness, light, lamp, lamb.)

How do we picture God? That’s part of what Jesus came to do. He has come to reveal God to us, to flesh out the father for us. Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father. We don’t know exactly what Jesus’ physical appearance was like, but we can get an idea – a conceptual understanding of God the Father – based on the characteristics we have seen in Jesus and his life. How do we picture God?

Turn with me to Hebrews 1 and let’s look at a powerful passage of Scripture. The more we look at this extraordinary visit and visitor, the more we start to understand the extent of his great love, the price that he paid to come and be our Redeemer and Savior. We start to grasp something of the significance of the incarnation and the amazing value he places upon us and when we grasp that, it changes our life and our

outlook and our passion.

**“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” Hebrews 1:1-3**

God has been speaking to us all along. He has not been silent. He spoke to our ancestors through the prophets (notice “at many times and in various ways”). All along God has been sending messengers telling his people of the visit and the visitor that would come. (Is. 7:14; 9:2, 6-7). All along God has been preparing the hearts of the people to receive this extraordinary visitor who would come in an extraordinary way to accomplish the most extraordinary task -- to give himself as an eternal sacrifice that would redeem us from our sins.

God has, through all of these messages and messengers, been slowly and progressively revealing himself, speaking through fire and smoke and rituals and symbols. But in these last days, the bible says, God has chosen to speak more specifically, more distinctly, with greater intimacy and clarity – he has chosen to speak to us “in his Son” (or NIV and KJV “by his son”).

Notice that He did not just send his son as another messenger, like one of the prophets. Jesus was not just a messenger, he was and is the message! Unlike the prophets of old who had a word for us from the father **Jesus was the Word that was with the Father**. The bible testifies, **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” John 1:1-2.**

The passage in Hebrews says God spoke to us “by His Son” and some translate as “in His Son”. The point is: **Jesus is both the message and the messenger**. God spoke to us “by” everything Jesus said and he spoke to us “in” everything Jesus did and everything he was. Everything he did and everything he is, is a message to us. Let me illustrate. You could send me a letter asking, ‘Do you and Paula have any children? If so, what gender, what age, what personality, who do they resemble, etc.?’ I could send

a message to try to answer all those questions, or even send a messenger with the answers and a picture to help explain, but would you really understand? Or, I could send Sarah and Rebekah, and if I sent them the answers to your questions would be answered not merely by the message sent but by the messenger sent. I would be speaking to you and answering your questions, “by” Sarah and Rebekah as well as “in” Sarah and Rebekah. They are not just the messengers, they are the message. Now look at what Hebrews tells us about the message and the messenger that came to visit us.

**1. He is appointed heir of all things (v2).** It is already settled. There are no stipulations to the will, no conditional clauses. There was nothing he had to do to acquire this. All that exists belongs to him. He is heir of all things. Imagine that. Everything in the earth and on the earth. In fact, Colossians 1:15-17 gives us even further detail. It tells us that everything not only belongs to him, it was made by him and without him it would not exist, it would not hold together.

Now consider this. If he was already designated as heir of all things, then why this extraordinary visit by this extraordinary visitor? He already had everything coming to him, so why come to earth as a baby to be among us? The answer is found in Romans 8:15-17. Look at this passage with me. **“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” Romans 8:15-17**

**Why did he visit us?** Why was he born of a virgin and come to this world to suffer and die a cruel death if he was already appointed as heir of all things? The answer is astounding! He did it **So that we could be made a part of the family and declared to be heirs with Him!** Through his redemption and our faith in Christ as Savior and Redeemer and Lord, we are made joint heirs with the heir of all things! What an extraordinary visit and visitor. What incredible love and grace. He stooped to being made a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7 and Psalm 8) – this one who was already appointed heir of all things – in order to make us, the ones who were not

even children, heirs with him. We were strangers, nobody, alienated from God, but he came to make us sons and daughters, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Now that is what Christmas is all about!

**2. He made the universe (v2).** It literally reads “made the ages.” It indicates through Jesus everything that was, everything that is and everything that ever shall be has been made. He is the source of it all. God willed it to be, Jesus the Son spoke all things into being according to the Father’s will and the Holy Spirit’s power was the creative energy that brought it all into being.

He created the universe in all of its splendor and unfathomable majesty. We know this, but keep in mind it is this One, the mighty One, heir of all things and the one by whom all things exist, he is the One who became flesh and dwelt among us so we could understand and we could be saved. It is incomprehensible, that he would do that for us. The creator of the universe, lying in a manger. What an extraordinary visitor.

**3. He is the radiance of God’s glory (v3).** Other translations read the “brightness of his glory, the reflection of his glory, the shining forth of God’s glory”. The amazing thing about God’s glory that shines forth toward us – it is connected with his grace. We can’t see his glory without being recipients of his grace. In Exodus 33, God caused his glory to pass before Moses. Why was Moses allowed to see God’s glory pass before him? Because God told Moses he had found grace (favor) in his sight and that God knew Moses by name (Exodus 33:17). His glory is tied to his grace.

But you know what? Moses was this extraordinary character, someone who talked to God as it were, face to face. A friend of God whom God knew by name, but Moses isn’t the only one to see God’s glory. John 1 says “**We have seen his glory...**” Us. Not just Moses. Common folks like us. And what did we see when we saw his glory? “**...the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**” **John 1:14**

How could we see his glory? Look with me. It is revealed in connection with his grace and both grace and glory are connected to his name. God told Moses he would cause his glory to pass before him and he would proclaim his name to Moses. His name is a revelation of his nature. His name that he spoke to Moses is “**The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and**

**faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” Exodus 34:6-7.**

Moses received grace and saw God’s glory as God’s name was proclaimed to him. We received grace and saw his glory as we believed upon his name for there is only one name given under heaven whereby we can be saved and that is the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. He is the brightness of God’s glory for he is the fullness of the revelation of God’s grace! It doesn’t get any brighter than this. We receive his grace and when we do we behold his glory. We receive his grace and when we do his glory is manifested in our life and his name and his nature are birthed in us and in our souls and our character and our lives. What a glorious thing. He is the radiance of God’s glory and through his grace and mercy, we behold the glory of God and it is then reflected in and through our lives as we live in him and for him.

**4. He is the exact representation of God’s being. (v3).** Jesus is God. Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father. John 1:18 says “no one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only who is at the Father’s side has made him known.” Jesus is not a type, not a shadow, not a symbol, like so many other things had been. He is the exact, complete, total, full, image of God. The bible says, **“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” Colossians 2:16.** Paul says all that came before, all the feasts and festivals and Sabbath keeping, all those things were shadows of what was to come. He writes, **“The reality however, is found in Christ.” Colossians 2:17.** The substance, the reality, is found in Jesus. It gets no deeper than this. He is the fullness of God in bodily form and he exactly represents God’s nature to us.

**5. He sustains all things by his powerful word. (v3).** It is amazing that the one who reveals this nature of a servant – humble, meek, lowly of heart, gentle, is the same one with such awesome power that by his word he keeps everything from unraveling. He is the upholder and sustainer of everything. And the good news is, Jesus will continue to carry and support and uphold all of his creation. He holds everything together and he isn’t getting tired or weary. He is in control of all things, including your life. He is still in control even when it seems like things in your life are spinning out of control. If you will trust him and continue to commit your life to him, turn

it all over to him, he will hold it together for you. He will sustain all things - including you and your life circumstances - by his powerful word. And remember, this one who sustains all things by his powerful word, he is the one who came to visit us. What did the Psalmist ask? "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you would visit him." What an extraordinary visitor.

**6. He provided purification for sins (v3).** I think King James reads better, "...when he had by himself purged our sins". By himself alone. Jesus alone became the sacrifice for our sins. He purged our sins, he took them away. That's why I say it so often, that your works won't add anything to the purchase of salvation. He alone was the only worthy sacrifice and he needed nothing else. The value of his payment, his own life and blood, that alone is totally and completely sufficient to satisfy the debt of our sins. And because he alone was worthy to take our sins away and because He did pay us that visit of redemption, the writer of Hebrews says now...

**7. He is seated at the right hand of the Father. (v3)** Jesus after his crucifixion and resurrection ascended to the Father and is now seated at the right hand of God. By doing so he declared that redemption's plan had been completed, the work done, mission accomplished. The visit was complete. Everything that needed to happen to secure salvation and eternal life for me and for you has been accomplished through Christ. Thank God for the completeness of his salvation. There is nothing left for me to try to earn or achieve.

What an extraordinary visitor and what a glorious Savior, redeemer and Lord. And here we are, at this season of Advent. We stand with wonder and amazement as we look into the scene described in Luke 2. Mary gave birth to her first born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. And then we stumble up to that manger and look in, realizing that this infant, this tiny visitor is the message and the messenger, he is the heir of all things, the creator of all things, the radiance of God's glory, the exact image of God the Father – this tiny baby is the sustainer of all things and the redeemer of the whole world. This tiny visitor is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And yet he loved us so much that he came to this sin-cursed world and made himself a vulnerable infant, helpless and clothed in flesh. Ultimately He gave himself as the sacrifice for our sins. He loved us so much that he gave his life for us.

Behold the wonder of Christmas – God has become man and dwells among us. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited us and accomplished redemption for his people.”

What a visit and what a visitor. What love that has been shown to us. He loves you. He himself has purged us of our sins. You don't have to carry the burden and weight of your sins any longer. You don't have to carry the burden and guilt of the past. Come to Jesus today and be saved. He is able. He is willing. He is ready. Look to him as your redeemer today.

He died to save you. Aren't you tired of living in rebellion against the God who loved you so much? It's time you repented and turned away from your sin and came to Christ in repentance and faith. Now is the day. Now is the time. He has come to deliver you. He has come so that you might have life. Open your heart to Jesus today.