

Advent Midweek III
Philippians 2:5-11
St Paul proclaims the Incarnation: “Incarnate and Glorified”
December 17, 2025

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the first two weeks of this Advent midweek series (a series we conclude tonight), we have considered that, to properly celebrate and meditate upon Christmas, we ought meditate upon the marvelous reality of the incarnate God, that the Second person of the Holy Trinity became flesh (a breathtakingly profound reality in itself), but also that He became flesh “for us men and for our salvation” – or, more intimately, “*for you*”... not for himself, but for you... and that that “for you” reality of the incarnation leads to everlasting benefits – served in tangible gifts – not just for you and your salvation in spirit, but in body.

But, if our Advent meditation on the wonders of the incarnation is to be more complete, we ought also meditate upon a final wondrous mystery... one that St Paul proclaims boldly, and one that is often captured in our Christmas hymnody, but perhaps not recognized as it ought be.

How many beloved Christmas hymns speak of the glory of the Christ child, the royalty of the newborn *King*? For example, we sing those beloved words of “What Child Is This?” –

“This, this is Christ the King,

Whom Shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud
The babe, the son of Mary.”

And, what we sing on Christmas Eve, we also echo Christmas morn or throughout the Christmas season... for example, the hymn’s well-known refrain, “Come and worship, come and worship; Worship Christ, the newborn King.”

Now, those certainly speak of Christ’s glory, his kingly status. But, here’s where we may meditate more properly regarding this final wondrous mystery of the Incarnation: Maybe it’s easily lost on us and we ought pause to recognize that there’s a difference between confessing the glory and kingship Christ has *from* eternity (which is how we often think of it – “King *from eternity*”) and confessing that the God-Man continues to have that glory *for* and *unto* eternity. To sing, “This, this is Christ the King” is not only to say, “He in His divinity is the King over all creation” (as in the God and King *from* eternity, from before the beginning and foundation of the world); but it is also to say, “This babe, the Son of Mary, is the King who will come again and judge the living and the dead” (as in the God and King not just *from* eternity but *for* eternity, even after the end, the earth’s last day). Or, as we sing it, “Glory to the *newborn* king.” Doesn’t the idea of him being “newborn” look ahead, to what He will do, how He will reign? Yes, we ought marvel at confessing that the incarnate Christ, not only your God but your brother, not only the divine nature, but the very flesh-and-blood human nature,

those two natures mysteriously of that one Jesus Christ will continue to have that glory as King *for* and *unto* eternity... and even continue to have it in a manner by which he shares the inheritance of his glory and exaltation with *you*. Let's consider all this...

When St Paul proclaims the incarnation, he does so to the Philippians with these words: "At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Now, you say, "But that doesn't confess Christmas at all!" True, not the *event* of the birth and manger... but the incarnation is not just an *event*, but an everlasting nature and essence as the result of that historic event. The one who was once – as an event – "incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary" is now forever incarnate – as an essence, and his glory and kingship is now forevermore one known and experienced by his own human flesh and blood. And Paul points this out when he says, "At the name of *Jesus*, every knee shall bow"... Jesus, the *human* name, for the God-*man* will forever be glorified and worshiped and revered.

Now, this may seem a bit too 'theologically formulaic' for and irrelevant to daily life; you may say, "Well, who cares if Christ is forever glorified in the incarnate essence or in his divinity? What difference does that make? What does that have to do with me, my daily life, or even my salvation?" But, this is where it is important to understand how Paul proclaims that *you* are tied to the glorification of this incarnate God-Man... and why Paul begins that whole section

by saying, “Have this mind among yourselves.” For, when Paul says, “At the name of Jesus,” it’s as if he were to say, ‘At the name of the One who, even in glory, shares your human nature, at His name every knee shall bow. And He with whom we share our human nature, He will share His glory with us.’ Indeed, all throughout the epistles Paul is highlighting that Christ gifts us *more* (!) than ‘justification before God’ (not to belittle that, but just to point out that God’s plans for us are more than being declared ‘not guilty,’ but a complete ‘life everlasting’ on that basis of justification)... indeed, an eternal share in his **glory**.

Indeed, in arguably his first-ever epistles, those to the Thessalonians, Paul says that God “called you through our gospel so that you may obtain” (not just “justification”, but) “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now, if that still sounds ‘spiritual’ and not part of ‘incarnate reality daily life’ to you, then consider *how* you will share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What does Paul tell the Philippians just a chapter after our text: “He (Christ Jesus) will make our lowly bodies like his **glorious** body by the power that enables him to subdue all things to himself.” Yes, a share in his glory is a share in all the glory he knows in his own incarnate body, from the top of his head down to the very last toe. In other words, a glory we will share in, not by taking off the incarnate so as to better comprehend the spiritual, but

a glory of the new creation you will experience in the very body God made for you in the old creation.

And that glory begins with the resurrection, doesn't it? (odd to hear, because we often think of the resurrection as the end!, but it's the beginning), as Paul tells the Philippians that it was his own singular goal and joy and focus to "know him (Christ) and **the power of his resurrection** and to share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain **the resurrection from the dead.**" Yes, "have this mind among yourselves." Or, as he says the same thing more concisely to the Romans, "If we share with him in a death like his, we shall certainly share in a resurrection like his."

Therefore, even from the spiritual washing of baptism and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to make your body his temple, your salvation and glorious inheritance is incarnate – "baptized into his death, that we might share in his resurrection" (none of that is spiritual sounding, but incarnational benefit!)

Yours is an eternal share with our brother, our incarnate flesh-and-blood brother. In fact, to show the relationship between Christ and His Church, doesn't Paul even use the very image of incarnate man? To the Ephesians Paul writes, "[God] gave [Christ] as **head** over all things to the church, which is his **body**" ... and thus that body shares in the full glory of Christ the head. Notice there, how – by divine inspiration – Paul uses images of the incarnate body – the

pinnacle of God's creation (God looked at man as the pinnacle of His creation and said, "It is very good") – Paul uses that pinnacle of the creation to explain our forever-after attachment and relationship to Christ. Where the head goes, so goes the body. If the head is the same yesterday, today, and forever, how can the body ever change? And if the head is raised and glorified, the body will certainly follow.

And thus, St Paul's proclamation of the incarnate Christ's glory ties *you* to that glory. Not some mere spiritual glory (tying you to singing "Gloria" with the stars in the sky on Christmas night), but glory you will know and experience and live in forever in your own flesh-and-blood immortality, for

The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory"... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gives us the victory, a share in Christ's glory... and it all begins with the marvelous, mysterious promise of the Incarnation, that God would forever become flesh and blood... not for his sake, but for yours. "For you."

Indeed, "for you" should again remind you of not only last week's meditation, but should remind you of the Sacrament! Isn't

the Sacrament the fullest expression of Christ sharing his glory with you this side of heaven? The Lamb of God is not just he who takes away the sin of the world, but also the Lamb who stands as though having once been slain, the Lamb who stands in glory, with the four living creatures and the myriads of angels surrounding him in the midst of the throne... and that glorious One shares His glory with you: “Take eat, this is my body; take drink, this is my blood.” Can the glorious One share His glory with you any more intimately than in the Holy Supper? Can anything in all creation compare with the Sacrament’s participation in and confession of – simultaneously! – the *incarnation* of and the *glory* of the Christ?

So, you ought always meditate on Christ’s incarnation in this manner: His share in your flesh-and-blood means your share in his glory. *His* birth and *your* resurrection belong together – forever pulled together, tied together, sewn together by the outstretched arms of his crucifixion. Yes, His birth and your resurrection belong together. Which is to say, Christmas and Easter belong together (they are there together every Lord’s Day, aren’t they? The incarnate Lord and risen Lord sharing with us the fruits of his completed messianic mission?) Yes, Christmas and Easter belong together; more than that, the angels announcing His birth in humility and the trumpets announcing your ascension to glory belong together; more than that, the very first gospel promise of Christ’s incarnation and the very last gospel promise of His reappearing for your vindication

belong together. It all belongs together, your benefit eternally joined to His divinity, for He has eternally joined Himself to your humanity.

We began tonight's meditation with Christmas hymns that rightly speak of Christ the king. Perhaps less common is the Christmas focus that ties *His* incarnate glory to *yours*! Paul Gerhardt's beautiful Christmas hymn, "O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is", which in this generation, we've re-learned and re-loved, speaks of the incarnate glory not only being Christ's, but yours!:

"Remember thou what **glory** now
The Lord prepared **thee** for all earthly sadness.
The angel host can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.

The world may hold her wealth and gold
But **thou**, my heart, keep Christ as thy true treasure.
To Him hold fast until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure."

Such a proclamation is not unique to Paul Gerhardt, nor even to St Paul! Isaiah 52 and 53, the famous chapter of Christ's suffering upon the cross, our first reading tonight, how does it conclude but that Christ will share the spoils with his followers?:

"Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, **make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."**

That's how Isaiah prophesies it, how the ancient prophecies speak of it, so that you may know St Paul proclaims for you the same gospel that has always been proclaimed, from the very first promise of Eden. A gospel of Christ's bearing in *his* body your sin and death, that you may bear in *your* body his glory and life. An incarnate glory is yours, an incarnate victory is yours... that was forever-ever manifested for you in the incarnate God-Man, first unveiled in flesh-and-blood as the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths was laid in a manger.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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