

God Is NowHERE

Meditation, December 19, 2010

Texts: Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:1-7

In the sermon title, there is a typo. The typo is significant. The typo, when corrected, can change your whole outlook and perspective on life. The typo, when corrected, will convey hope, rather than despair. The typo, when corrected, can turn cynicism into joy, bring stability out of chaos, meaning to an otherwise pointless existence, and light out of darkness. By the way, don't blame Mrs. Desmond, this typo is my fault; it is intentional. Let's correct it: Place a space between the "w" and the "h." Now, read the corrected title together: GOD IS NOW HERE.

God is now here! That's what Christmas is about, Immanuel, God with us. He is now here. Light enters darkness, not because we have struck a match, or because we have somehow kindled a flame from the flint of life and steel of our longing. No, Light has invaded from beyond. It is a most special kind of light. It is not a finite source of light like the flickering candles we will snuff out when the service is over. This is Light from the eternal source of Light, the light of a child born of God; light which cannot be extinguished. **God is now here.** We celebrate that the One from beyond time and space, the One Who is before anything was, the One who brought all things into being, the One who sustains them still, the One beyond, behind, and above all reality has now become tangent with that reality. God has entered the confining envelope of time and space in this intersection of eternity and mortality, Creator in creation, the Artist becoming a living part of His picture. In the wonderful words of Charles Wesley: "*Veiled in flesh, the God-head see. Hail the incarnate Deity.*" Technically, He's not just veiled in flesh, as though wearing a costume, but truly human. All of God that can be absorbed in humanity has become visible to us ... in a baby.

Saturday we will celebrate God entering human history, not amid trumpet fanfare or the pageantry of royal courts, no news conferences, no blonde Fox news reporters, no photo-ops, no front office people to put a spin on the events. No, God simply "slips in" unnoticed. Well, not *quite* unnoticed; He couldn't help but let a few others in on it with angelic choirs and miraculous stars ... but He slips in as a child born to young parents on the road, miles away from home; the birth coming, like all births, on its own inconvenient, yet demanding schedule. He is born, not in a palace, but in humble accommodations, and placed in a manger for a bed, a feeding trough filled with straw.

It's important to note God did not come in anger, filled with wrath lusting for punishment or vengeance. God came in goodness and loving kindness, filled with a lust of a different kind ... the lust to give us life. He has come not as a judge wagging a finger; He has come as a child just inviting us to embrace Him. God has come to us as one of us, so that in this child, you and I might become one with God, in and through Him. Forever after, now, we shall know of our acceptability, because God took on human flesh. Forever after, now, we will know we are the object of One who eagerly seeks to give what most of us spend our entire days searching after ... life, peace, meaning, joy, purpose, and hope. That is why we have all the singing, all the rejoicing. God came into a world that thought itself godforsaken, and **GOD IS NOW HERE** to make clear we are forsaken no more.

GOD IS NOW HERE. He came to fill our emptiness, to make new our times of failure. He came to experience our pain, in order to heal it. God took on our frailty and weakness, became open to hurt, disappointment, and failure, even loss; in the incarnation God experienced it all. Before it was over, God would know what it means to be human in every dimension, from its extraordinary joys and laughter, to the depth of abandonment, suffering and death. And when this cradle led to the cross ... the darkness finally gathered about Him with greatest force, set to extinguish His light altogether. When that happened, God invaded our reality anew, to do a wonderful new thing. At that time the light that first invaded on this night long ago, invaded once again to drive out despair, transforming grave to resurrection, the despair of death to the hope of eternal life.

In the midst of our longing, in the shame of our failures and the shadows of our darkness, when God seems no where, the message of this season is **God is now here.** Those who embrace this God can find peace in the midst of pain, hope in the center of the hurt, new life even as this life comes to its end. Regardless of the darkness which may surround us, our welcome of Him brings light, light that shines in the darkness to state with finality the message of this season ... that you and I are forsaken no more.

God is nowhere? No. God is now here. Amen.