

HOMILY  
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## HOMILY

*Christmas Day, 1910*

EPISTLE—HEBREWS i, 1-12; GOSPEL—JOHN i, 1-14

AT this season we are accustomed to give gifts one to another. Such a custom well befits the time when we are called upon to render thanks to God for His great gift to us. God loveth a cheerful giver. He loves that we should follow His example, for He is *the* cheerful Giver. He is kind even to the unthankful and evil. Freely and unconstrainedly He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Perhaps we are not altogether unthankful. But are we ever thankful enough? Do our hymns and anthems express the genuine rapture of our souls? Do our hearts break forth into singing and cry out with the apostle, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift?" That they may do so, let us approach once more with all the faithful, joyful and triumphant, let us come to Bethlehem as did the simple shepherds, the "star-led wizards" and the heavenly host, let us fall down and worship God visible in flesh.

Here all depends upon the inward vision. Outwardly there is nothing extraordinary to be

seen. A tender babe, true human flesh and blood, wrapped in swaddling clothes, cradled in a manger. But this is God, almighty God. This is He who in the beginning *was* with God, the effulgence of His glory, the very image of His substance, without whom was not any one thing made that has been made. In presence of such a mystery what can we do but worship?

But while worship satisfies the heart, yet the mind craves something more. Like children we would examine our gift, and see what it contains. And this is lawful if we keep to the right order. First faith, then reason. If we start with the confession that Jesus is the Son of God, then we may apply our minds to comprehend the length, breadth, depth and height of all that is involved in that tremendous fact. If we invert the reasonable order, and having first formed our own theory about God proceed to judge of Jesus by it, we shall surely befool ourselves. We must believe that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, *then* we may behold His glory.

Let us then, as God's believing children, reverently examine our Father's gift. What does it contain? Two things, the Scripture answers; He is full of grace and truth. Grace denotes that quality in God which we may imperfectly describe as His spontaneous, unconditional benevolence. The Psalmist expresses it in the words, "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all

His works." St Paul puts the point more strongly, "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." The point is that His kindness has no relation to the merits of the creature. He does not love us because we are good. He does not cease to love us because we are sinful. He loves because it is His nature to love, because He is Himself. The evil heart of unbelief looks at a sinful suffering world and says, If God be almighty how can He be benevolent? Faith points to Bethlehem and replies, Why the Almighty suffers evil we cannot explain *yet*; but about the benevolence there can be no mistake, for here is God Himself united to the fallen suffering creature, ready to abide by all the conditions which He Himself has permitted or imposed. There is no possible explanation or motive assignable for this save grace, goodwill towards men.

And as the Word made flesh is full of grace, so is He of truth. What is the use of any further discussion about man's nature, responsibility or destiny? Why perplex ourselves with endeavours to solve by our own wits the problems of free will and probation, of sin and atonement, of death and future life? Here, in the Word made flesh, we may see them all set out and settled, not in mere theory but in fact. Here we see manhood in the terrible white light of union with God; and the truth, the

absolute reality, about man and his relations to God, stands out in radiant clearness, for all to see who will not shut their eyes. Was it unreasonable that God should expect man to obey Him? Here is One, Very Man, who by simple faith obeys perfectly. Was it unfair to expose man to temptation? Here is One who is tempted in all points, but holds His allegiance fast. Is sin a fiction, and atonement a figure of speech? Oh, look at the sinless Son of God in our flesh, see how He withers under the blight of our sins that are laid upon Him because of His oneness with us, how He cannot accept deliverance save by enduring the penalty which He Himself insists on, saying "Thus it must be." And is the deliverance a cunningly devised fable? Behold the Virgin's Son, raised from the dead, still in that nature which was fashioned from the dust of the earth, but now immortal, incorruptible, glorious, the pledge that the whole creation shall be renewed, and death shall be destroyed.

These are the *facts* by which God preaches the gospel to all who will believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the truth of the Word made flesh. Let us rejoice and give thanks; and let us make ourselves ready to meet Him who once came to His own, when His own received Him not, but who will come again and receive us to Himself.