**Lord’s Day 14; Prof. B. Holwerda**

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ,

This afternoon we must think and speak about Christmas facts; for in this Lord’s Day the church confesses about Jesus Christ, received from the Holy Spirit and born out of the virgin Mary. This Christmas gospel is all too well known to us, yet it always remains new. And the more we read Scripture about it the deeper becomes our wonder and reverence for the great mystery of the divine; God, revealed in the flesh. But we only come to this reverence via Scripture. We so easily go the other way with our emotions, then we suppose for ourselves; the Son of God, a small and adorable, fragile and helpless little being like newborn children. Then there is emotion, but this is not yet faith.

Because Scripture does not dwell on the fact that He was small and lovely and tender; but Scripture does say, that He was humiliated and an outcast and cursed; that he did this for us; that what happened here was impossible with man. The wonder is not that he was born, birth announcements are in the paper everyday; but that he was born in this way, that is the wonder, which is impossible with man. That he was born tender and lovely and helpless is not extraordinary, you can see this everyday with people, it is common with people. But it is that the beginnings of the life of this child were there without the doings of man, this is what is impossible with man.

Received from the Holy Spirit; here is a new and strange beginning, here the new man is born, yet born out of the virgin Mary, our sister according to the flesh and according to the Spirit; Christ Jesus does not remain outside, outside of our human society, outside our human ties. The Spirit carries Him in, into our human nature, for He, says Matthew, is the Son of David, also the son of Abraham, and the son of Adam says Luke. For in this sequence of David and Abraham and Adam there still comes a new man and a new beginning. A new beginning now comes in our life, in my life. And the evangelists have not drawn for us idyllic and emotional scenes about the little child Jesus. They did however write about genealogies so that we would believe that He is the son of Adam, Abraham and David. And fortunately our confession has maintained this, that by this new birth a new beginning comes to our nature, because now there is a true man, the true seed of David, the true brother. We confess:

*Christ, received from the Holy Spirit, born from the virgin Mary.*

1) The Son and Lord of Adam.

2) The Son and Lord of Abraham.

3) The Son and Lord of David.

**ONE**

The evangelist Luke writes the gospel of Jesus Christ. But at the moment he ends the message of the activity of John the Baptist, in order to tell what Jesus had done and taught, he first writes a genealogy. This lineage he inserts as an introduction to all the work of Christ.

But what is noteworthy is that he, different than Matthew, brings the lineage down to Adam, the son of God. Because Luke had heard Paul speak, and had come under a deep impression about what Paul says about Christ as the second Adam. After that Luke sees the entire gospel in this light, it is the second Adam who came to work and teach.

Therefore a very unique light falls upon the Christmas gospel which he writes: for it is the birth of the second Adam. Adam’s Son and Adam’s Lord. The first Adam was not born, but created. The second Adam was born, but also created. He is born, born from the virgin Mary. He is created, indeed, received from the Holy Spirit. He is born, so He is now Adam’s Son; he is created and becomes Adam’s Lord.

For Adam has had many children; the Scriptures say he begot sons and daughters. But a curse lays over all these life beginnings; the allocation of judgment lies heavy upon every crib in Adam’s tent. And at every crib God asks: is Adam your father and head? Then you are declared a sinner on account of the disobedience of that one man. That is what it means to be a child of Adam. So now Adam’s descendants no longer have a future; for no matter how often the crib is brought into the light of day, the sentence remains, and Adam’s guilt comes over all his children to perdition. No one can break this ill-fated injunction; it is impossible with man. It shall apply to every child anew: born and conceived in sin. Through the progress of guilt and sentencing and punishment comes death, the progress of life becomes the progress of death!

But now Jesus Christ is born of the virgin Mary, daughter of Adam. Adam receives a son, but this time he does not beget a son; Jesus Christ is not from the loins of Adam. This is the tale of what is possible with God. God pushes Joseph aside, in other words He pushes Adam aside. He takes Mary, he lays claim on Adam’s flesh and blood; this child will have Adam’s flesh and blood but He is not born of that blood, nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God. This time Adam does not beget a child, it would not benefit him, he would only increase the misery, for Adam can only carry the guilt further, and broaden the scope of condemnation. But he does receive a child. God creates a child. God makes a new beginning in Adam’s blood. And because God creates, it is therefore Holy. It stands *outside* of guilt and perdition, for it is received from the Holy Spirit. Yet it comes *subject* to guilt and perdition for it is born from the virgin Mary.

Everything is placed into this situation. In that which was impossible with man, but which is possible with God. Here is the Holy one and guiltless, who enters our human nature, in its guilt and decay, and who takes that upon Himself, and thereby frees the children of Adam. God gives Adam a child, he has done so more often. He gives Adam a Lord, that has never happened yet. And now God lays everything upon Him, all the guilt, all the curse, all the decay of our nature; but through this our guilt, in which I was conceived and born, is now covered up before God’s countenance. This means to say that now my human nature is again free. Now it again becomes the true human nature. This is not a piece of dogma, but a confession of faith. God has reestablished our life on a new basis, and brought about the great return. My guilt, in which I was conceived and born, is covered before the face of God. God can again receive me in His favor. In this new beginning the power of sin is broken in me. I now become again an uncorrupted person.

There are some, especially amongst the youth, who suggest that faith puts a damper upon life. That to be a Christian signifies a withering, a smothering of real humanity. That being Christian suggests: that this and the other is not allowed; that everywhere there are placards written “Forbidden Territory”. But don’t they know that Christmas has come, and that thereby the really human, the true human nature is liberated? To be Christian is that you again will eat from all the trees of God’s garden. The world lies open: God loves you again, because the guilt is removed: God’s smile now beams over every crib. He exalts Himself over our splendid and boisterous boys. His good pleasure is great over our boys and girls, as love comes into their lives, and when they get to work. They are all Adam’s children, although God sees them in Jesus Christ, Adam’s Son and Adam’s Lord. And now again we stand in the clear, the true humanity, which is only there in faith. The inhuman, the curse, the twisted growth of nature is all taken away. God has made you right in Jesus Christ. All doors in God’s broad world are finally opened through Him.

The Son and Lord of Adam. A new beginning. You know how Adam’s children have armed and flown against each other, have fallen apart. We experience it everyday, we no longer see it go well again, that hate between the nations. Until now every peace (agreement) was the beginning of a new war and we say there is no hope for the world anymore. So therefore it is a breath of fresh air, no, our salvation. that we confess Jesus Christ today, Adam’s Son and Lord. The nations bleed to death, yet we see the light glowing above the fields of slaughter, the light of Jesus Christ, the second Adam; who takes away the sin of the first Adam, and turns to nothing the splintering curse of separation. All Adam’s children undergo the curse of his sin, division eats away, eating deeper and deeper. But at the same time I see Him, the second Adam, who gathers, who gathers by His Word and Spirit a congregation from every generation and language and people and nation. Then I can sing in this torn world: Peace on earth. Because sin has reigned unto death, but grace will reign to eternal life through Jesus Christ.

**TWO**

But Matthew says that from now on he is also Son of Abraham. The catechism alludes to this, when it says that he has become like His brothers in every way. His brothers. This is not a term for a relationship of the flesh, but of a spiritual bond. Brothers, that is the fellowship of Abraham’s children, the circle of the covenant.

You well know that when He called Abraham God allotted a new fellowship, a new living community within the circle of Abraham’s children. He called him out of his own kin and country, and from his father’s house, in order to establish the covenant of grace, with him and his seed after him.

And Abraham also receives children, not children according to the flesh, but children of promise. And so within the society of Abraham’s sons, where the guilt continues, you receive a new society, where the promise continues, the promise of grace. There comes a fellowship of brothers, who are heirs of the promise of life.

Yet even that circle can not move on.

Life runs dead in Adam’s fellowship: life proceeds from father to son, but the way of Adam runs foul; who will give a clean thing from an unclean? Not one!

But Abraham comes, and a new covenant is established. Now the promise proceeds from father to son. And now it appears that Abraham’s road does not run to a dead end. Now not only does the judgment of condemnation in Adam hang above every crib, but also the promise to Abraham.

And yet also the circle of Abraham runs dead.

For in every covenant there are two parts included. Here is not only the promise of life from God’s side, but also the demand to a new obedience from mans side. And the promise is only fulfilled where the heirs bring about a new obedience. This they cannot do. So the promise continues from generation to generation, but the demand that is tied to the promise is not fulfilled.

And therefore the promise is not obtained.

Abraham can receive an endless amount of children but the fulfillment of the promise does not come any nearer. Abraham’s children go into exile, later they sigh under the Romans on account of their disobedience. There you have it again, no Jew can change what is impossible with man.

But listen now: Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, daughter of Abraham, He is born; now He is Abraham’s son, now He stands amongst many brothers; He is also created, for He is received from the Holy Spirit: now He is Abraham’s Lord and the first born among many brothers. Abraham receives a son, but this time he does not beget a son. And this is the tale of what appears possible with God.

God pushes Joseph aside, God pushes Abraham aside. He takes Mary, he takes possession of Abraham’s flesh and blood, but this child is born, not by blood, nor by the will of man, but from God. Now Abraham is saved, and the whole communion of brothers. Abraham can receive children, and can carry the promises over to them, but he never gets a child which fulfills the demand of the covenant and enables the promise to be fulfilled.

But God creates a child, He makes a new beginning in Abraham’s flesh and blood. He is holy because God creates Him. He now stands as brother among the brothers, alike in all thinks, sin excepted. He can fulfill the demand of the covenant because He is received from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, because He is still Abraham’s Son and born of the virgin Mary, He will obtain the promise to Abraham. So Abraham’s Son stands here, heir of the promise, yet high above Abraham and all the brothers of Abraham’s Lord, fulfiller of the demand of new obedience, and therefore also fulfiller of the promise. Abraham’s seed is now saved, and the brothers can look up to the first born among them comforted. Didn’t He fulfill the covenant? He acquires grace, He fulfills the demand of the law; He is the covenant in person.

Thus Christmas is determinative also in our time. Abraham’s Son and Lord. We will not be ashamed of it, salvation is from the Jews. And we know it well enough: according to God’s sublime counsel of salvation a part of Israel has hardened itself. But there is yet hope for the wandering Jew; because the gifts of grace and calling of God are non-regrettable. Christ has fulfilled the promise to Abraham, therefore there is a future for Abraham’s children. The promise remains, all Israel shall be blessed.

Jesus Christ, received from the Holy Spirit, born out of the virgin Mary, daughter of Adam and Abraham. From Adam, therefore He is a light to the gentiles. But from Abraham also and therefore He is the glory of His people Israel.

And you know it, we who were gentiles, we are engrafted into Israel‘s vine, enlisted into the circle of the brothers and heirs of the promise. We celebrate Christmas, and we sing of Him, in whom the covenant is fulfilled; who has satisfied the demand, and bore the curse, for us, His brothers, and causes us to walk in the new obedience.

Now the baptismal font is a very comforting thing; our children are baptized in Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection, are included in this new beginning. Now it is sealed for them, not only that the curse of Adam’s sin is broken, but also that the fulfillment of Abraham’s promise is accomplished. Then we get children in a bitter, comfortless world, where there is little room for the church; yet we sing: our sanctified seed will inherit the blessed earthly kingdom. For Christ is born. Abraham’s Son and Abraham’s Lord, our brother Jesus Christ, and the first born among many, without Sin.

**THREE**

And finally: Jesus Christ, the true seed of David. David’s Son and David’s Lord that is. I will not say so much about it for I have often done so in the Christmas sermons.

Hope arose for Adam, by Abraham. Then the allocation of the covenant of grace came into the world. Hope came to Abraham by David, for then kingship entered into the covenant. And so there is now a small society formed within the circle of the covenant, where not only the promise but also the crown is passed on.

Now the road appears to be completely paved: in David, for Abraham and so for Adam. Because David will deliver Abraham’s seed, and in Abraham’s seed all the children of Adam will be blessed.

Yet also the road of David runs dead. He carries the crown, but he has defiled it himself. He counts his people, and loses his people on account of it. They fall by the thousands. The crown is carried by his sons after him, but when they become great they exalt their hearts, and the kingship comes down with a crash. For David it is hopeless when Mary receives her child. David cannot deliver Abraham, and therefore Abraham could not bless Adam. This is what is impossible with man.

But everything is possible with God, for we profess Jesus Christ, received from the Holy Spirit, born out of the virgin Mary. He is born: David’s Son, yet also created, for He is received from the Holy Sprit: now He is David’s Lord.

David receives a son, but he does not beget a son. God pushes Joseph aside. God pushes David aside. He lays claim on David’s flesh and blood, but still this child is only born of God. God makes a new beginning of the royal line. He stands there, at the end of a fallen royalty: David’s son; who pays the penalty of David’s sin; yet He stands as eternal King, David’s Lord. Because God has said to Him: sit at my right hand.

In this way Christmas is comforting in today’s world: the church suffers and struggles, all the world is in need. But who has the hilt in hand? Therefore we hold to the Royal Psalm: the mountain shall carry peace, and the hills righteous justice. The needy will be cleansed….. For, we are the blessed of the gentiles. And what else can we do but this: to praise the fortunes of this king, who ascended David’s throne?

Receive His name with eternal glory!

**Amen**

Sermon delivers Sept. 26/1943

Read ~ Luke 1: 26-38

Sing ~ Hymn 2: 3; Hymn 5: 2; Ps. 22: 9, 10; Ps 22: 11; Ps. 72: 1, 10 (BoP)