

God Became Man! This is the Most Benevolent Event in History!

Sermon for Christmas Day

Sermon Text: Colossians 2:3-10



³ in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. ⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

“Man can rise above himself!” the first general secretary of UNESCO, Julius Huxley (1887-1975) expressed. With this, Julius Huxley stated for the first time the concept of transhumanism. Today, there is a very different philosophical direction behind this term. This term means that people can transcend the boundaries of one’s biological body. Followers of this philosophy think that it is possible to enhance or better people so that they no longer are bound to limits like age, illness, or physicalness. For example, one could store his better self in a computer and thereby always be free from physical limitations. That’s the theory.

The philosophy of transhumanism today seems unusual and strange to us. And yet the thought is not only ancient but affects us all. First of all, we as Christians also start with the basic idea that humans have limits and are flawed as stated in Psalm 103:15-16: *As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.*

The fight against human weaknesses and human mortality is ancient as well. The Greeks living during Paul’s time, had another idea of how one could conquer this mortality. They thought that the physical world was surrounded by a spiritual world. They imagined an entire pantheon of divine beings that were active in the background and who influenced the physical world. The basic idea of the Greek sect that was also active at that time in the Christian community was that man could make use of these spirits. One could be happy and healthy by struggling to reach the top of the spirit world and making it one’s own or perish if one didn’t. That’s why there were special festivals, rules, and rituals so that one could have a better life or could be more successful. To be honest, this temptation to be able to aim high and to want to aim high is nothing new. One can even understand this a little because people want to be something better with all our hearts and we find the limitations of our freedom through illness and death frightening. We also long for something better than suffering and death! This longing can be understood in principle. Yet these longings so often mislead us. Instead of finding a new and better life by aiming high, we find absolute ruin. Paul counters all these theories from back then as well as theories from our time and kneels before the Father who is above all heavenly beings and confesses: God made me and I can place my whole life, whether young or old, sick or healthy, fat or thin, disabled or above average intelligence, everything into my Heavenly Father’s hands and expect only good things from Him. I can do this every day and attempt every hour anew to put my life into God’s hand and expect good things from Him. But it can be that we often don’t understand the direction God is leading us. Instead of going up high, God always goes the exact opposite direction, into the depths. The path to God does not go up, but down. God, who alone is superhuman, and of whom it can only be said that He is transhuman, clothes Himself as a child and places Himself in a manger. Martin Luther writes: God asks us to fear, love and trust in Him above all things, and Luther goes on to say: But at Christmas, God takes this first Commandment and puts it on the Son, saying: “THERE is your God. He’s in the manger. Take Him as your God. If you

love Him, you love Me. If you trust Him, you trust Me. Because you will find Me in Him and nowhere else. The secret of Christmas is that we find God as a human lying in a manger. And conversely, the secret is that we find our humanity in the God who is in the manger. God becomes human, truly human. As people strive to grow beyond our humanity, God becomes human, and we must realize that God wants us... humans... to be truly human too – with all our failures and limits and mortality. Dear congregation, Christmas is in the air when I see God among us. Christmas is in the air when I find not only Joseph, Mary, and the Baby in the manger, but also join the shepherds and wise men. And two miracles occur at Christmas: The first is that I find God among us. And the second is that in all my being, I also find myself in God's presence. Yes, God among us! God has put down very deep roots in our world. God really was born; He really lived our life and is so firmly established in us that He even took our death upon Himself. And that's why I can grow so solidly into this Jesus, like Paul writes: "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith." The Colossians of that time actually had the idea that Christ was only a part of a much greater spiritual reality. They thought that Christ was just a type of light beam that flashed into our dark world and then disappeared again. For this reason, they believed that it would not be enough to just be a normal Christian. One would have to be a "trans-Christian" that is, an even better or even more gifted Christian, in addition to his baptism. There was also partly real fear behind this thought because Christ alone would not be enough, they thought one could be on the wrong side of the Spirit and thus suddenly be carried away by an evil fate. And they also thought that it could be possible that there could be a part of our life where Jesus can't get to. They were really afraid that God would let them fall in the end and bring them to ruin. We are also not strangers to this idea. Everyone is afraid of a sudden evil fate that can snatch us and our lives away in a few seconds. Contrary to this fear and this entire philosophy, Paul answers with the birth of Christ. Christ really established Himself in our world. He has established Himself not only in Bethlehem, but also in your life... into your whole life. When you receive His Body and Blood today in Holy Communion, Bethlehem and Christmas are in your heart. You don't need to worry if Christ has come only partially to you, you also don't have to worry that there are any dark sides in your life that God can't reach. No, just as Jesus became fully man, He will also dwell completely with you. And if you are afraid that God might let you fall, look to this Baby in the manger. He was not at all ashamed to become fully human. If He was not ashamed of living in a stable, then He also isn't ashamed of your stable or your heart. And if that is so, then Jesus is completely rooted in you and you completely in Him. Christmas means that God is completely in our midst. The miracle is that we not only find God with us in this manger, but we also find ourselves. In all his writings, Paul emphasizes the words, "In Christ" again and again. We can be "In Christ" only because Jesus Himself came to us and took on our flesh. He walked our roads. He who came from Heaven, also enters into your everyday life. He knows what bothers you. He knows when you are at your limit. And that's exactly where He wants to be.

The Greek philosophers who wanted to make use of the spirit world, as well as the previously mentioned Transhumanists, basically identified something good – for they recognized that man is imperfect in his nature. The only problem is that they are searching in the wrong place to solve this imperfection. Human beings are created by God. And if we deny that, we deny ourselves. Without God, we also diminish our humanity because when we deny God, we also deny people. That's why the most benevolent event in our history is this – that God became human and became one of us – which gives me, as a human being, great confidence. Amen.