

Taking Christmas into the New Year / Church of the Open Bible / 01.03.16

Introduction

Look up John 1.14: This describes the _____, that the divine Son of God occupied human flesh.

For Prayerful Reflection: When you read the first sentence in John 1.14, what comes to mind? Why is this one of the greatest miracles? Why is it surprising? Why do we celebrate it?

Professor Svigel: “The message of Christmas is the message of the incarnation of Christ—fully God and fully man, two complete natures in one unique Person. C. S. Lewis called it ‘the Grand Miracle’ of Christianity. If you think that sounds a little heavy for a holiday of ribbons and wreaths, you’re right. But the problem isn’t with the doctrine ... it’s with the decorations.”

Christ Acted in Humility

Look up Philippians 2.3-7. The divine Son of God gave up his _____ with God the Father in Heaven to come here as a mere person.

For Prayerful Reflection: humility is not thinking little of oneself, it is disregarding one’s value or importance, to submit to the will of God or to serve others. Whom do you know who truly exhibits such humility?

Paul said we should treat one another as _____ important than ourselves!

For Prayerful Reflection: How could you be more concerned about the interests of other people in the church? In what ways could you treat others as more important than yourself?

Professor Svigel: “The eternal Son of glory gave up His heavenly rights for us. We earthly humans can surrender our temporal rights for one another... Are you stubbornly holding on to your own ways? Like Christ, we must release our rights for the sake of others.”

Christ Selflessly Stepped Out of His Comfort Zone for His Mission

Look up Matthew 20.26-28. Jesus stepped out of his comfort zone to _____. This is true in many ways even just in coming here, but the extreme example is that he came to give up his life so we could be saved.

For Prayerful Reflection: Are there commands of scripture you hesitate to fulfill, because they involve being uncomfortable? Are there needs of people or of the church which you ignore, because getting involved would make you uncomfortable? Do you think it more likely God wants to keep you in your comfort zone or God wants to stretch you from time to time and develop your sense of dependence on him as you broaden your experiences?

Look up Matthew 28.18-20. Both _____ [sharing gospel truth with non-believers so they come to faith] and teaching/mentoring [raising up new believers to become mature disciples of Christ] are the responsibilities of every believer, as a part of the church.

For Prayerful Reflection: How could you be more intentional about building relationships with non-believers, showing them the love of Christ and hopefully sharing the good news about Christ? What steps could you take to become more prepared to share the gospel with non-believers or to teach/mentor other believers in the church?

Professor Svigel: “Because the divine Son stepped out of the comfort of heaven for us sinners, we should step out of our earthly comfort for the lost. We can’t wait for them to come to us. Like Christ, we must pursue them. Don’t be afraid to endure the darkness of the world to shine the light of Christ for others.”

Christ Sacrificed for Others

Look up Luke 9.57-58. Jesus was willing to give up most _____ things, for the sake of his ministry and mission.

For Prayerful Reflection: Who is the most generous person you know? Why is that attractive in a person? Why is it Christ-like in a person?

If we follow Christ’s example, we will _____ more and consume less.

For Prayerful Reflection: In what ways could you cut back consumption or what could you give up, so you could give more to the church and to other Christian charities?

Professor Svigel: “Because God the Son gave up the benefits of infinite riches for us, we should give our earthly wealth for Him. When I do a quick inventory of the “stuff” I’ve accumulated in just the past year, I’m ashamed. How about you? Are you building yourself a little kingdom here on earth or investing in the Kingdom of Heaven? Don’t forget—the God of glory began His human life lying in a feeding trough and ended it nailed to a tree. Like Christ, we must surrender our riches for His kingdom.”

Conclusion

Three things we can learn from the _____ of Christ as revealed by his arrival that first Christmas: being humble, being willing to leave our comfort zone, being sacrificial.

Professor Svigel: The verse, “‘The Word became flesh’ is the true heart of Christmas.”

Prayerful Reflection: How much does your heart and life reflect the Christ we celebrate at Christmas?