

Title: “Uninvited Guest”

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Philippians 2:5-11, John 1:1-4, 14, 17

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Service Readings: Philippians 2:1-11, John 1:1-18

Service Song: “See Amid the Winter’s Snow” LSB 373

What do we do with an uninvited guest? It turns out that it is not what we do but what He does for us.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. This is what John writes. Like an evening winter scene we imagine God slowly descending to Earth, arms outstretched and calling his children into his arms. He is here. He has arrived. And he is dwelling among us. And in the background, we hear the first verse of “See Amid the Winter’s Snow” as stringed instruments play in quiet harmony:

See amid the winter's snow
Born for us on earth below
See the tender Lamb appears
Promised from eternal years

But like so many images in this world there is more here than meets the eye. For hidden behind the security of this passage exists a reality that is much darker than even John seems to depict. Just a few sentences before he simply states this:

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

This is how John describes it. And it’s worth pausing here for just a moment to contemplate the message that he is impressing upon us. “The world was made through him.... the world did not recognize him... his own did not receive him.” These words may imply a creation that is insolent towards its creator but that only *begins* to describe reality. The world didn’t simply not receive him, we didn’t simply not receive him, the world *hated* him! *We* hated him. In our sinful condition we lashed out at him, rejected, and despised him. The creator was actively being hated by the created! *This* is what John is trying to inform us. We had no need for God and no desire to repent and turn back towards him. We wanted nothing to do with him. Quite simply, he was uninvited in his own creation. *This* is the message that underlies “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

“See Amid the Winter’s Snow” continues with the third verse:

Sacred Infant, all divine,
What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this!

This may not make for a good Christmas card message, but it is true that God came into his creation *uninvited*. Jesus, the God Son, was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilot, was crucified, died, and was buried and then rose again. But not because we asked. So, the question becomes why. Why did he do it? Why did he send his only son into the world as a sacrifice for those he created, those who turned away from him?

John tells us why and it's a very simple answer. It isn't about the world hating God. It's about God loving the world. It's about a love that runs deeper than any ocean, that is wider than any universe. It is about a God who created and was satisfied with his creation. It was good. And man? Man was very good. And sin corrupted all of that. But although creation was corrupted, God's love was not. It was just as boundless as it ever was. And because of that love he did for us what he knew we could not do for ourselves. His creation was in trouble and only he could save it. And so, he sent his son into his creation to restore what sin had destroyed. And with perfect and willing obedience, that is exactly what Jesus did. Our epistle reading today describes it:

though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of
men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the
point of death, even death on a cross.

This is what we celebrate at Christmas. The world may look to us and question our joy over the birth of a child, however special they might agree that he was. But we know that the real joy, the real celebration comes not from his birth but from his death and resurrection. But we celebrate his birth because it marks the entrance of God into his creation. It is a visible sign of his abundant love, and we cannot contain ourselves – we *have* to celebrate his entrance. Our God, the God of all creation has humbled himself and has become his creation. It is an act of immeasurable humility but an act that reflects his immeasurable love for us.

“Hail, O ever blessed morn! Hail, redemption's happy dawn! Sing through all Jerusalem: 'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'” This is the refrain of “See Amid the Winter's Snow” and it captures the joy that flows from our hearts. Christ is born! He has come into this world because of his great love for us. He has come to save us and restore us unto himself. Hallelujah! Christ is born!

Once uninvited we now call out to him to come again for we see what he has accomplished on our behalf. By our faith we begin to recognize our standing before God. We are sinful, destined for destruction, and in desperate need of his mercy. We understand that we have turned from him, rebelled against him, and have uninvited him into our lives. But God, rich in mercy and boundless in love reaches down to us and offers forgiveness. He speaks into our hearts and calls us to him. And in our baptism, he forgives our sins and gives us everlasting life. And we respond by turning back towards him in love and adoration. We praise and worship him for the grace that he extends. How can we not?

Teach, O teach us, holy Child
By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee
In Thy sweet humility.

You see, this is the message of the Gospel – the good news of God. And Christmas is only just a part of it, but it's the part that we celebrate during this season of the year because it is the part where our fallen creation first sees our creator face to face. It's the part of Gospel message where God says, "you may have not invited me, but you know not what you do." And because of his actions we come to know exactly what we do. And we turn to him and say "Hail, O ever blessed morn! Hail, redemption's happy dawn! Sing through all Jerusalem: 'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'" The uninvited becomes the invited in our lives. And the invited becomes the one that we look forward to returning. Christ return!

Please pray with me.

Let all together praise our God
Before His glorious throne
Today He opens heaven again
To give us his own son.

He undertakes a great exchange
Puts on our human frame
And in return gives us his realm
His glory and his name

Amen.

(LSB 389)