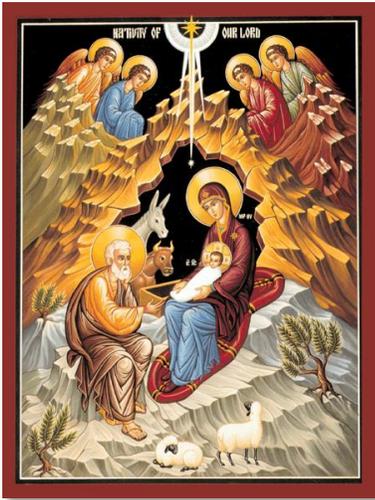


Christ Jesus Came Into the World TO SAVE SINNERS

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As we move towards the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, gratitude is the emotion that should fill our minds and hearts. Jesus came for a specific reason. The Comfortable Words in our Prayer Book capture this: “*This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world TO SAVE SINNERS.*” (My caps - 1 Timothy 1:15)

For many, that’s a large and bitter pill to swallow! ME, a sinner? The popular understanding of a sinner is a bad person or someone who does bad things! Most don’t see themselves as “bad” or having done “bad things!” However, the Christian Faith asserts that Sin is a state of alienation from our Creator through rebellion, breaking of laws, etc. We have found ourselves apart from God. The mercy of God was expressed as our loving Heavenly Father sent His Son to rescue us and to redeem us from our sin-filled state.

The editors of the Red Hymnal (remember that one?) refused to include the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace” because the committee got hung up on the lyric “who saved a *wretch* like me!” Most moderns have little sense of their wretchedness before a holy God.

The theological slide began decades ago. Karl Menninger, a leader in US psychiatry entitled his 1973 book “Whatever Became of Sin?” The same is reflected in what some assert a dumbed-down series of Prayer Book confession prayers starting in the mid-20th C.

*that saved
.....
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.....
like me*

Many contemporary mainline Church leaders even deny the plausibility of the atonement – Jesus’ work of addressing the sin of the world through His death on the cross! If we are not sinners or if there is no Sin, why was Jesus’ horrific death necessary?

I remember a conversation I had with a parishioner in my US parish – Dr. Peter Toon, a world-class Anglican Theologian and President of the American Prayer Book Society. He said categorically that most people today do not see their need to be reconciled to God. Despite having penned one of the best known 20th C. theological works on the atonement, he was perplexed as to how one might bridge to the modern mind their need for Christ AND the fact that they were “dead in sin!”

One early 20th C. preacher stated – “you must understand the Bad News in order to appreciate the Good News!” When we grasp the depth of despair our alienation from God elicits and our personal culpability – the grace of God (undeserved love in addressing our sin-problem) stands in stark contrast. If the Lord gave us what we deserved, we’d be in big trouble!

However, there is forgiveness and new life offered through our Saviour Jesus Christ as we turn from our sin, welcome the Lord Jesus to reign in our lives and walk with Him in joyful obedience – the path of true peace and love!

That’s what Christmas is about – the true “reason for the season!” Will you receive the ultimate gift of Christmas? Jesus our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer and embrace the gift of forgiveness and new life in Him? Why wait for Spring (as the old advert states!) DO IT NOW!!