

“Divine and very personal.” Christmas Address.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

What is going on? Why are we all here? Why are you here?! Sure, we have our ideas and explanations...

We live our lives. Day by day, week by week, month by month. Dealing with all the life stuff that comes our way. Daily responsibilities, family issues, marriage, parenting, aging, health problems, financial challenges, people problems in our lives, troubles in work or business, dreams, hopes, disappointments, and so on.

Then, once a year, towards the very end of year, we kind of start slowing down. Hopefully. And then there is Christmas time. We may have some time off, some time with family, some time to take a deep breath before the next year falls upon us.

Then Christmas Eve comes. Seemingly a good time to visit the Father's house. To be here. To sing. To listen. To relax. Hopefully to find some of that much needed peace and joy that this season is associated with. That explains it a bit...

But what is really happening?! Forget about what you thought about Christmas, I want to share two dimensions of what is happening right now, which – I have to admit - we cannot fully comprehend or appreciate.

Still... **Let's reflect on the divine and on a very personal dimension of what is happening.**

First, the divine dimension. Quite a different perspective on what we remember and celebrate this evening. We heard different readings from the Bible. Some of them are so ancient that we cannot even trace their exact origin.

Some of them are millennia old. The latest were written almost twenty centuries ago. But they all speak in one accord. They all bring us the same message. They all reveal to us God's plan, which was there already in the beginning. What was it?

The Bible is clear, the message from our Triune God is clear. From before the creation of the world, God the Creator knew what would happen. He is in complete control of everything, the history to its smallest details flows through His hands.

The Triune God knew what our first parents would do. He knew that sin and death would come into this world. For us that is a mystery, a scary one, but for Him nothing was unexpected. And He also knew what He would do.

As soon as our first parents have brought sin and death into this world, as soon as humanity was doomed to live in misery for millennia, the Son of God came to us and gave this ancient promise, that He Himself will reverse the curse of sin and death.

That He Himself will restore the goodness of His creation, that He Himself will take all the responsibility for what has happened and will pay the highest price. His very life. Why? To regain our trust, to regain us, to bring us back in fellowship with Him.

As we heard today, He kept repeating this promise again and again, gradually revealing details of His plan. Time. Locations. Until, in the fullness of time, God Himself, the Son of God came as one of us, to dwell among us, to live, to die and to rise again for us. Yes, He did it! And then He promised to come back again.

We live today. We don't know much else, but today. But for our God both the beginning and the very end are clear. He knows what will happen and when it will happen. Nothing and no one can put any obstacles in His way. He guides the flow of history. He will bring forth His New and Restored Creation where He Himself will dwell among His people, and where His people will see Him face-to-face.

And this is most certainly true. Yes, it is difficult, it is impossible to comprehend, but this is the picture that our God has revealed to us. This is what we remember and celebrate today, the birth of Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of God's ancient promise. As we also look eagerly to His return, to our ultimate hope, our life with Him.

This much about the divine dimension of why we are here today. But then there is also a very personal dimension. Personal for you. You are not here by accident. Our God, He is your Creator. As He Himself said, He formed you in your mother's womb, in His book were written all the days of your life, before there was even one.

He has guided the history of this world in such a way, that when time was right, you were conceived and born. You grew up under His protection. It was Him who brought into your life those people, through whom you for the first time heard about Him, about Your Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

It was Him who orchestrated the entire history in such a way, that one day you could hear His voice, that you could hear Him calling you. And as you listen to His voice, He sends His Spirit to dwell in you and to create a new heart in you.

This is what is happening right now as well. Let this sink in.... This is not about just visiting the Church, just calling in for Christmas. We can't grasp the magnitude and the significance of what we experience right now, of why we are here.

Of what God is doing for you and with you. We only see this moment from our imperfect and limited perspective. From our limited experience, with our limited understanding. We struggle to believe how great realities unfold around us.

The same God, the Timeless, the Eternal, who spoke everything into existence, who came to us as one of us two millennia ago, whose birth the entire world remembers and celebrates, He has led you here and He now speaks to you. Yes, He does!

What do I mean? This is how He does it. He speaks through people. By His grace He calls some imperfect sinners, He moulds and shapes them, teaches and equips them, so that we could deliver His message, so that He could speak through us. Yes, I am talking about your pastors. I can tell you; our God has gone to incredible lengths to bring me here so that He can speak to you.

But why all of that? Because He really cares for you. He cares that you can hear His voice. That you can receive His message. That He can send His Spirit to dwell with you. That the bond of hearts is created, that there is trust between Him and you.

He cares that you are rescued from the enemies we are helpless against, sin, death and devil. He wants to seal you with His Spirit, mark you for life eternal, as one of those who will inhabit New Heavens and New Earth and will see Him as He is.

This is what is happening right now. This is why we are here. This is why you are here. How blessed we are to have a God who cares for us so much! Jesus Christ. Who holds the entire history in His hands.

Who is so patient with us, who forgives our neglect and hostility, who is gracious enough to keep calling us to Himself even when we stubbornly keep ignoring Him. How blessed we are! I know this is too big for us to fully comprehend. It is certainly too big for me. But this is what the Word of God reveals to us. This is why we are here. This is why you are here.

May the Holy God, the Lord of history, Jesus from Nazareth, whose birth as one of us we celebrate today, make sure, that when you leave today, you are not the same anymore. That you are much closer to Him. For you will be.

Blessed Christmas! Be changed!

Amen.