

“Why are you here?” 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 here today?! Why are you here? There may be an obvious explanation. We live our lives. Day by day, 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 towards the very end of the year, we kind of start slowing down. Hopefully. It's Christmas time. We may have some time off, some time with family, some time to take a deep breath before the next year jumps upon us.

Then Christmas Eve comes. Seemingly a good time to visit the Father's house. To pray, sing, listen. To feel good. Hopefully to find some of that much needed peace and joy that this season is supposed to bring us. That may be an obvious reason.

But what is *really* going on?! Why are we here? Let me suggest two other reasons. **One is truly universal, or we can say cosmic in its scope, and the other is very personal.**

First, the cosmic one. We just 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. In one voice through the ages. They all bring us the same message. They all reveal to us God's plan for humanity, which, note this! was there already in the beginning. What was it?

The message from our Triune God is clear. From before the foundation of the world, our benevolent Creator knew what would happen. 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 none of that 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, while paying the highest price

imaginable. His very life. But why? To regain our trust, to regain us, to bring us back in fellowship with Himself.

As we heard today, He kept repeating this promise, gradually revealing details of His plan. Time. Locations. Until, in the fullness of time, as foretold, the Holy One, 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: "I will return for you!"

We live on this day only. 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 blessed people will see Him face-to-face. This is most certainly true.

Yes, this is incomprehensible for our little minds, but this is what our God has revealed and wants you to know. This is what we celebrate today, the birth of Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of God's ancient promise.

Everything in this age unfolds and is flowing towards God's appointed end, and that is what we are being reminded of again on this day. As we also look eagerly to His return and to our ultimate hope, our life with Him. For it's coming. Coming soon.

That's one reason for being here, but... there is also another, a very personal reason. Very personal for you. You are not here by accident. The Triune God, He is your Creator. He has guided the history in such a way, that when time was right, you were conceived and born.

As He Himself said, He knit you together and He formed you in your mother's womb. In His book were written all the days of your life, before there was even one. You grew up sheltered under His wings. And it was Him who placed 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 everything in such a way, that one day you would hear His voice, that you would hear Him calling you. For as you listen to His voice, He sends His Spirit to dwell in you, to create a new life in you, and to unite you with Himself. This is what is happening right now as well. Let this sink in....

This is never about us just visiting the Church or just calling in for Christmas. We can't grasp the magnitude and the significance of what unfolds here right now, of why we are here, of what God the Father is doing for you and with you.

The same God, the Timeless, the Eternal, who spoke everything into existence, who was born as a baby two millennia ago and whose birth the entire world remembers and celebrates, He has invited and brought you here and He now speaks to you. Yes, He does! What do I mean? How does He do that?

This is how He does it. He speaks through people. By His grace and wisdom, He calls some imperfect sinners, He moulds and shapes them, teaches and equips them, so that they 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 some lengths to bring me here so that He can speak to you. But why all that effort? What is the point? Don't you know?! Because He really cares for you. For each one of you!

He cares that you can hear His voice. That you can receive His message. That the bond of hearts is created, that there is trust between Him and you. He cares that you are freed from the enemies we are helpless against - sin, death and devil.

He longs to embrace you and to hold you in His arms so tight that no one can harm you. He wants to seal you with His Spirit, mark you for life eternal, as one of His heirs and the citizens of New Heavens and Earth, who will reign with Him forever.

This is what is happening right now. This is why you are here. That is the reason. A very personal reason. For Him and for you. How blessed you are to have a God who loves you and cares for you so much!

Who is so patient with us, who forgives our neglect, ignorance and hostility, who is gracious enough to keep calling us to Himself even when we stubbornly keep ignoring Him. Your loving Father in heaven. How blessed you are!

I realise this is too big for us to fully comprehend it. I struggle. It's overwhelming what the Triune God does for us. For me, for you. But that is what His Fatherly heart is like. This is why you are here. For He so wants you to be with Him. To know Him.

May this Holy God, the Creator and the Lord of history, whose birth as a baby boy Jesus from Nazareth we remember and celebrate today, may He make sure, that when you leave today, you are not the same anymore. That you and He are much closer. In His embrace. Loved. Cherished. Known. Cared for. For you are.

Blessed Christmas!

Amen.