

♪ Worship Notes ♪

THEME: Christmas

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

*He is the radiance of the glory of God
and the exact imprint of his nature.
(Hebrews 1:1-3a)*

Christmas above all is the celebration of God becoming man, of the Father sending His Son to enflesh perfect humanity. As the unique God-man, Jesus reflects and embodies the glory of God (though some of the manifest display of that glory was veiled temporarily through his self-emptying in the incarnation, Philippians 2:6-7). We see the glory of God in Christ at many points in his story:

HIS PREINCARNATE GLORY

*“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”
(John 17:5)*

HIS INCARNATE GLORY FORETOLD

*These things Isaiah said because he saw His **glory**,
and he spoke of Him.
(John 12:41)*

HIS INCARNATION AND MINISTRY

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we saw His **glory**,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
(John 1:14)*

HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH

*“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’?
But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, **glorify** Your name.’
Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both **glorified** it, and will **glorify** it again.’
(John 12:27-28)*

*“But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels,
namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with **glory** and honor.
(Hebrews 2:9)*

HIS RESURRECTION

*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the **glory** of the Father, so we too might
walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)*

*. . . God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him **glory**,
so that your faith and hope are in God.
(1 Peter 1:21)*

HIS ASCENSION

*“By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness:
He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed
among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in **glory**.” (1 Tim. 3:16)*

HIS EXALTATION

*“Now, Father, **glorify** Me together with Yourself,
with the **glory** which I had with You before the world was.”
(John 17:5)*

HIS SECOND COMING

*These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction,
away from the presence of the Lord and from the **glory** of His power,
when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day,
and to be marveled at among all who have believed.”
(2 Thessalonians 1:9-10)*

HIS WORK IN US

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image
from one degree of **glory** to another. . . .*

*The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,
to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the **glory** of Christ,
who is the image of God.*

*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord,
with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts
to give the light of the knowledge of the **glory** of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
(2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4-6)*

Christmas Reflections

Man's Maker was made man
that the Bread might be hungry,
the Fountain thirst,
the Light sleep,
the Way be tired from the journey,
that Strength might be weak,
that Life might die.
(Augustine)

Light looked down and beheld
Darkness.
"Thither will I go," said Light.
Peace looked down and beheld War.
"Thither will I go," said Peace.
Love looked down and beheld
Hatred.
"Thither will I go," said Love.
So came Light and shone.
So came Peace and gave rest.
So came Love and brought Life.

(Lawrence Housman [1865-1959])

A CHRISTMAS SONNET

The kings have come and gone; the shepherds, too;
Now who is this still standing at the door?
An old and careworn woman, tired and poor,
So old she makes the stones themselves seem new.
She carries something in her trembling hands,
And, bending low, her eyes alit with joy,
She lays it down beside the sleeping Boy.
And then—a wonder happens! As she stands,
The wrinkles disappear, her stance grows tall,
Her head stands high; face radiant as the dawn,
She looks at Mary, smiles—and then she's gone.
A glance at what she's left tells Mary all—
The ancient, withered apple makes it plain:
Through Second Adam, Eve is born again.

(Brent Davis)

BEFORE THE MARVEL OF THIS NIGHT

Before the marvel of this night
Adoring, fold your wings and bow,
Then tear the sky apart with light
And with your news the world endow.
Proclaim the birth of Christ and peace,
That fear and death and sorrow cease:
Sing peace, sing peace, sing gift of peace.

Awake the sleeping world with song,
This is the day the Lord has made.
Assemble here, celestial throng,
In royal splendor come arrayed.
Give earth a glimpse of heav'nly bliss,
A teasing taste of what they miss:
Sing bliss, sing bliss, sing endless bliss.

The love that we have always known,
Our constant joy and endless light,
Now to the loveless world be shown,
Now break upon its deathly night.
Into one song compress the love,
That rules our universe above:
Sing love, sing love, sing God is love.

(Jaroslav J. Vajda, from *Now the Joyful Celebration: Hymns, Carols, and Songs*, Morning Star Publishing Co., 1987; there is a beautiful choral setting by Carl Schalk published by Augsburg)

Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor;
Thrones for a manger didst surrender,
Sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.
Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor.

Thou who art God beyond all praising,
All for love's sake becamest Man;
Stooping so low, but sinners raising
Heavenward by Thine eternal plan.
Thou who art God beyond all praising,
All for love's sake becamest Man.

Thou who art love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship thee.
Emmanuel, within us dwelling,
Make us what Thou wouldst have us be.
Thou who art love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship Thee.

(Frank Houghton [1894-1972]; commonly sung as a carol to the traditional French tune "Quelle est cette odeur agréable?")

WELCOME, ALL WONDERS

Welcome, all Wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer to winter, day in night,
Heaven in earth, and God in man.
Great little One! Whose all-embracing birth
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

To Thee, meek Majesty! soft King
Of simple graces and sweet loves.
Each of us his lamb will bring,
Each his pair of silver doves;
Till burnt at last in fire of Thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice.

(Richard Crashaw [1613-49], "The Holy Nativity of Our Lord God: A Hymn Sung as by Shepherds"; there are many choral settings of this text)

Jesus was not a godlike man, not a manlike God. He was God-man.

Midwifed by a carpenter.
Bathed by a peasant girl.
The maker of the world with a bellybutton.
The author of the Torah being taught the Torah.

Heaven's human. And because he was, we are left with scratch-your-head, double-blink, what's-wrong-with-this-picture? moments like these:

A cripple sponsoring the town dance.
A sack lunch satisfying five thousand tummies.
What do we do with such moments?

What do we do with such a person? We applaud men for doing good things. We enshrine God for doing great things. But when a man does God things?

One thing is certain, we can't ignore him.

(from *Next Door Savior* by Max Lucado, Word Publishing Group, 2003)

Coming Worship Events

CALVIN SYMPOSIUM ON



January 28-30, 2010
Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

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NEXT MONTH: SONG IN SCRIPTURE (PART 3)

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