

INCARNATION and CELEBRATION

Dallas Willard

Sunday Morning Sermon - Valley Vineyard Christian Church
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"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has placed in us the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19)

"This is the mystery hidden for ages....Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27)

1. Incarnation in Christian history, and to the world looking on, is usually thought of as a huge problem. What does it mean that God was in Christ? And how is it possible for God to be a human being? Endless controversies.
 - Thirteen or so positions identified as heresies, with long names, in Church History. Most are sincere, if confused, efforts to understand the nature of Jesus Christ. Which we will probably never do. Like the nature of the Atonement. The fact is one thing—God was in Christ—the theories quite another. Metaphysical bafflement overwhelms the mind.
2. Incarnation means "in-flesh-ment." What is this flesh which the Word became? (John 1:14) Through flesh the word "dwelt (tented, camped) among us" and we saw, "beheld," its glory, uniquely God begotten, full of grace and truth." Another report puts the astonishing factual reality of Jesus in other terms: "Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38).
3. "Flesh" is not meat. It is not just physical substance, but that and more. Flesh is living substance, and in human beings it is living social substance. IT IS SOCIALLY ORIENTED DESIRE. It is the driving force in human life on its own, apart from God, AND, AS SUCH, IT LEADS TO CHAOS. (The "Works of the Flesh," Gal. 5:19-21)
 - Paul's list of fleshly attainments. (Phil. 3:3-6)
 - The "fleshy" Corinthians. (1 Cor. 3:3-4)—"Mere men"!
4. The warfare of the flesh and the spirit. (Gal. 5:17) This is the constant conflict between desire and the human will in the ordinary course of fallen human existence.
 - Desire obsesses on its object, not on what is good. It wants what it wants, and is deceitful (Eph. 4:22), promising happiness if you will just give in.
 - The human spirit is will, always considering alternatives and seeking what is truly good, not just what you want.
 - The state of conflict: "The things I would, that I do not, and the things I would



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not, that I do." (Rom. 7:15-16)

5. Deliverance: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." They not only have a life in them that comes from the Spirit of God, they also walk—carry out their moment by moment existence—by the aid of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:24-25) Christ has come into the flesh and defeated sin in the flesh. (Rom. 8:3)
6. Then, as we build our lives around him, the flesh, human powers and abilities, human desires and their fulfillment, are good, as God intended them to be, because they are subordinated to what is good under God. They are no longer the simple self-assertions of desire run wild. They do not dominate us and disappoint us and leave us empty, for we live unto God alone and our hope is in Jesus and his kingdom alone. These fill our lives and give us complete safety and purpose and meaning.
7. In this season of Christmas, celebrate the Lord and his goodness and greatness in everything that comes by and in all that you do. Let your flesh cry out for the living God. (Ps. 63:1) Pick a time and give the last of the Psalms (145-150) an ecstatic reading: Read them aloud, in a loud voice, standing, allow yourself to dance a bit as you read, pausing over the phrasing. "Jesus has come and my cup's overrun! Oh, say but I'm glad!"

"Oh come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"