

Isaiah 42:1-12

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."

Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them! Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, The villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, And declare His praise in the coastlands.

The Real Spirit of the Season

It might be beneficial, as the Christmas season rushes at us, and before we are overcome by the chaos of activity, to take a look at the real "spirit of Christmas" as expressed in God's Word: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV).

Although the manger scene is foremost in our minds, the wonder of the Christmas story is the incarnation; God becoming man. Paul reminds us in the Philippians passage that God, in the incarnation, denied himself. God the Son gave up what was rightfully His. AS eternal, triune God, the Son possesses full equality with The Father and The Holy Spirit, yet in the incarnation He denied Himself that sovereign position. He did not cling to the honour and the glory of His rightful position, an honour and glory that the angels fall on their faces before, and all creation will one day bow to. Instead, His appearance among mankind was as any child. Although the world has never brought forth such royalty, nor conceived such majesty, this God-child was born in the humble surroundings of a barn.

Paul tells us that this denial was one of complete emptying by the "taking the form of a servant". Jesus the God-man did not become less than God in the incarnation. The word "taking" emphasises an addition not an exchange. Jesus was not emptied of the form of God, but in becoming man, He was emptied of the manner of existence as God, when He took on humanity. Similar to Mark Twain's prince in "The Prince and the Pauper", God the Son set aside the insignia of majesty, while retaining full royalty (deity). While on earth, Jesus chose to operate in the will and power of The Father and The Spirit, laying aside independent use of His divine attributes. This true spirit of Christmas, a selfless surrender to the Will of God, was evident in the life of Christ from the humble manger birth to the cross where Jesus bore the agony of the world's sins.

In a world of selfishness and self-centredness, where comfort takes precedence over commitment, and convenience often rules over care, a reminder of the true spirit of Christmas is certainly needed. Before the rush is fully upon us, take time to reread the Christmas story (Matthew 1:18-2:23, Luke 1:26-2:20). As you read the texts, remember who it is that entered into human history in such a humble fashion; Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. Remember that this expression of humility and emptying was on your behalf: "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8 NIV), then pursue the true spirit of Christmas in selfless surrender to God.

What is my response:
