

Pastor Kenneth Mars

Tell the Good News about Jesus Convocation – Casper, WY

Saturday in the Third Sunday after the Epiphany

February 1, 2014

Text: John 1:1–18

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Bible begins with a statement on beginnings, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible is making its first epistemological claim, the first claim on how knowledge originates, how knowledge is obtained and justified. All that is known or ever can be known about the beginning, the middle, and the ending is found with God. He is the source of all knowledge; He is truth in its purest and simplest expression. To organize a conference around the question “What is truth?” is to ask how one can know God, His works and His ways.

The Bible doesn’t begin with presenting various arguments for God’s existence. It simply asserts God’s existence and that God can be truly known. By beginning with God, the Bible asserts that all knowledge and truth and goodness and beauty originate in Him. He alone creates. He alone makes the heavens and the earth knowable. He alone gives mankind the capacity to not only learn – the animals can do that – but the ability to know, imagine, will, and reason. Such is the blessed gift God gave when He created mankind in His image. “What is truth?” is but a question seeking to know God for He is the author of all beginnings and endings.

It’s not accidental that the apostle John begins His gospel with “In the beginning...” John is intentionally referring back to Genesis. All that is assumed and asserted in Genesis 1:1 is assumed and asserted in John 1. But John adds even more. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (1:1-3)

God the Father created in the beginning through His Word. And the Father said, “Let there be light.” Light came into existence, immediately and gloriously. And God said, “Let the waters teem with living creatures. Let the earth sprout vegetation. Let there be lights in the heavens to separate day and night....and it was so.” God the Father spoke the universe into existence through the glory and majesty of His Divine Word. All things were made through the Word of the Father, the same Word that existed from eternity before the face of the Father. The Word is the Father’s eternally begotten Son.

The goodness and reason and wisdom and knowledge of the Father were spoken into the very fabric of creation through the power of the divine Word. Applying our minds and hearts to know the truth as revealed in creation is to study the creative genius of our Trinitarian God. Through creation, we are privileged to read the Word of God written for all humanity to enjoy. By so reading, we find purpose, goodness, design, and pointers to an ultimate and greater destiny yet to be experienced.

The Son not only brings creation into existence, He also gives the light and life of the Father to all humanity. John writes, “In the Word was life, and the life was the light of men and the darkness has not overcome this divine light” (vs. 4). The life and light of mankind is grounded in the Word and darkness cannot overcome it.

Yes, darkness tries to defeat the light. The darkness of man’s original sin and all subsequent rebellion cannot overcome the light of grace revealed in the Word of the Father. Adam and Eve’s original sin was an epistemological sin; a desire to obtain knowledge outside the boundaries God established in creation. As God’s highest creation, Adam and Eve already knew what was good for it had been given to them and declared to them through the Word. And they knew what was evil, eating one, specific fruit which led to death, for God revealed that to them as well. They knew good and evil as God intended His creatures to know them. Such knowledge was good.

But they desired to know good and evil not as creatures made in God’s image, but to know as God does. Therein lays the sin that still haunts humanity; to know creation and the good and evil in it not as creatures but as gods, autonomous, self-directed beings. Much is being said in this conference that cautions us against this form of Adam and Eve’s original sin.

In spite of this darkness, the light of God’s knowledge could not be extinguished. For in the fullness of time, the Divine Word, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the undivided, holy Trinity, became flesh and dwelt among us in the man Jesus Christ. That most holy name you claim and cherish and worship is the Word through whom all creation came into existence. That divine Word became flesh. The Son of Father was seen in His glory, “glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Something most extraordinary occurred when the Word become flesh. God took into Himself our human flesh and blood. He is all that we are and yet without the one thing that doesn’t belong – Sin. Sin is a foreign corruption infecting all creation. In the beginning, the Word didn’t create us to be united to sin. The Lord Jesus Christ is like us

in every way that makes us human yet without the inherited original sin that condemns from the moment of our conception.

The Son of the Father received His flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit in order to sidestep the contamination of original sin. For the Lord's destiny was not to be conceived in sin but to become sin for us and for our salvation, a salvation gloriously achieved on Good Friday and Easter. Jesus, perfect man and perfect God, receives all of humanity's imperfections so that imperfect man might be the perfect image of God. The Word made flesh not only restores our humanity, He perfects it.

Do you see how extraordinary the Word becoming flesh is? Jesus is not only true man, He is the perfect man. Everything that we are intended to be, Jesus is, and more for He is also true God. That's the glory of God revealed to us in Holy Scripture. "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he (the Word made flesh) has made him known" (vs. 18).

What Jesus reveals of the Father is His desire and will to save and redeem a world hopelessly corrupted by sin and death. The saving knowledge Jesus brings to you and me is not merely abstract bits of truth which can be tested on a multiple choice quiz. Jesus brings knowledge of divine love and grace and forgiveness and gives them to you through His gospel so that you may know God, know Him in the deepest and truest sense. Jesus is not only the source of all true knowledge, He is true knowledge, true life and perfect love.

In the beginning, all things were created through the Word. In the fullness of time, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Through the enfleshed Word we see our hope and destiny, "that [we] may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.