

THE LORD IS COME IN HUMILITY
CHRISTMAS DAY

TITUS 3:4-7
FRI DEC 25, '15

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

How did Christmas day first make its appearance
for you this morning?

Were your eyes opened by faint glow of dawn
or smell of coffee drifting in
or from clock radio that started softly playing music?
or was it from lights in room suddenly being turned on
and someone jumping up and down on bed,
yelling, wake up! It's Christmas!

If you are sound asleep, which do you prefer?

Which is apt to get you up on right side of bed so to speak?
When Jesus made his appearance on that first Christmas day,
When God was ready to wake world from darkness of sin
and sleep of death to give new life
through Jesus, our savior, how did it start? Gently.

We will close worship today with singing "Joy to the World,"
a rousing hymn, even if we didn't have the instruments.

There is joy to the world because the Lord is come.

We have reflected in midweek worship on why he came
Today we take note of how he came,
as humble little baby in a humble manger.

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE APPEARANCE TO LOVE US.
JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE GENTLENESS TO HELP US.
JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE SERVICE TO SAVE US.

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE APPEARANCE TO LOVE US.

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us

Jesus is Lord of lords and King of all creation.

He is the almighty with eternal glory.

But when he appeared in person, the first glimpse of himself
he gave us was of his loving kindness.

Before this, when God made an appearance in visible way
to Moses and Israel on Mt. Sinai,
it was with blazing fire, billowing smoke, rolling thunder,
as he gave precious gift of his ten commandments.
But how did the people react? They jumped back
and said, "Moses, we are too frightened,
you go talk to him and tell us what he says."
The next time Jesus comes visibly, on the last day,
he will come in glory with all the angels
and with a trumpet blast the world will shake to pieces.
and the wicked will cry out in fear
for the mountains to fall on them to cover them up.
When Jesus' birth was announced to the shepherds,
it started with just one angel, but still they were terrified.
So why does the Lord come in such humble appearance?
I think one reason is so that we don't all run away.
He wants to reach out to us in love.
You know how when you are out in public with cute baby,
even total strangers are drawn to come say hi.
The humble baby Jesus wants to draw us to himself.
God loves us & wants to be with us but ever since Adam's sin
mankind has been running and hiding from God
because we know our brokenness, guilt and shame
and we are afraid God's holy glory will hurt us,
which it would if we tried to approach him
without humility and repentance,
Jesus comes humbly to move us to humility.
But it is because of the ruin of sin that...

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE GENTLENESS TO HELP US.

⁵ he saved us... according to his own mercy, by the washing of
regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on
us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

When you want to help someone who is injured or hurting,
Whether it is an adult just diagnosed with cancer
or a little child with a sliver in the finger,
you want to be gentle so that they don't just shut down
or jerk back and insist, "No! don't touch it."
Sin is deadly, it constantly hurts us and hurts those around us
yet it is human nature to deny it, hide it, avoid dealing with it
Rather than wanting it to be taken away, we hold on to it.

I compare it to a child holding onto to sharp knife - by the blade!
It needs to be taken away,
but it won't do to just grab it away.

So, when God mercifully works to help us, to take away our sin,
he works in a way that is as careful and gentle
Instead of grabbing us barehanded with all his power,
he handles us with kid gloves.

Instead of irresistibly forcing us to do anything
he deliberately works in a way that can be resisted.

through what we call the means of grace, the tools he uses
to build repentance & faith in us so we receive his grace.

Text says through Jesus Holy Spirit was poured out on us richly.

This is same Spirit who worked in Mary to conceive Jesus
after she said, Let it be to me as God has said.

Spirit also works in us to give birth to faith
using the Word of God, which is living and powerful
but which we are able to resist and refuse to listen to.

Jesus, the Word make flesh, works gently but persistently
through words of scripture to change our hearts.

and by his word of forgiveness removes our sin.

You may recognize words of text about washing of regeneration
and renewal of the Holy Spirit

to be part of Luther's explanation of Holy Baptism.

In Baptism God's word is the power that works
through washing with water to gently

bring even infants to faith and give them new birth.

Jesus' own word is the power in Holy Communion

which causes bread & wine to also be his body and blood
and which uses this to strengthen and preserve our faith
by giving us forgiveness of sins

Through these humble means: water, bread and wine,
the humble and gentle Jesus works with his word

to help the hurting and the dying in the way we need.

But the power and the mercy come from the fact that

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE SERVICE TO SAVE US.

⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but
according to his own mercy, ... ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we
might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit to change our lives
but this change in our lives is not what saves us.

v. 5 emphasizes we are not saved because of works
done by us in righteousness
but we are justified freely by his grace
because of what he has done in righteousness.

This is why Jesus was born as a humble mortal.

The goodness and loving kindness and mercy of God
was there before it appeared in Jesus' birth,
but what needed to happen because of the holiness
and justice and righteousness of God
which is also always there,
is that Jesus had to fulfill all righteousness in our place.

He had to become a lowly and humble servant,
carrying the burden of the law for us,
finishing up all the jobs we have left undone,
such as loving the unlovely and loving God perfectly.
He had to become a mortal to humble himself all the way
to an innocent death on the cross
to do the dirty work with his pierced hands,
scrubbing away the filth of all our sins with his own blood,
He had to humbly set aside all the glory of heaven
that was his as God's only begotten son
in order to give it to us, to make us God's adopted children,
heirs who inherit heaven
and so have the hope of eternal life.

Jesus could have made his appearance in our world
in no other way than as a humble little baby
because in this way the goodness and loving kindness
of God our savior appeared

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE APPEARANCE TO LOVE US.

He appeared as he did so instead of fleeing from his glory
we are drawn to his grace.

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE GENTLENESS TO HELP US.

He carefully heals our broken lives using the Holy Spirit's
gentle tools of the word and sacraments,
which can be resisted but are the power that changes us.

JESUS CAME IN HUMBLE SERVICE TO SAVE US.

He humbles himself to do the dirty work
of cleaning our hearts with his own righteousness,
suffering and dying to take away our sins,
and giving up his glory to give us the gift of eternal life.