

Taken 2

Under the cover of night, he shuffled quietly listening for the sound of breath, the sound of life, searching for a familiar face. He hadn't slept for hours and his body was screaming for repose, but he would not relent for he had one mission in mind. With his legs exhausted, his arms depleted and his hands bleeding, he bent low and said this prayer...

When we think of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Word made flesh, our hearts and our minds are drawn to the peaceful imagery of Christmas. Christmas carols, hot chocolate, nice fluffy snow falling outside. Then we ponder the mystery of the birth of Jesus and there he is in a clean manger, with warm lights, and peaceful animals and strangers visiting them. What a wonderful birthday for the Son of God! But have you ever considered that this is more than just a birthday but rather have you considered Christmas as a wedding of sorts?

I went to go visit a school a few weeks ago, and a student asked a very good question: if we did not sin, would Jesus still have become a man? Many theologians have debated about this issue and have varying opinions. This falls on the side of speculation because we had sinned, but if I had to answer theoretically, I would say yes, Jesus would still have become man. These ideas come from Scripture:

God chose us in him before the world began to be holy and blameless in his sight. He predestined us to be adopted sons through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4-5).

Ah, so God had a plan before the foundation of the world, before the world was created, he desired that we would be adopted sons through the Blessed Humanity of his Son, Jesus. God already planned for us to receive adoption through Jesus by being incorporated into his body. Yet Colossians gives us an interesting phrase.

All were created through him; all were created for him (Col 1:16)

Not only were we created THROUGH Jesus Christ, we were created FOR Jesus Christ. In fact, we were created FOR a Royal Wedding.

St John of the Cross articulated a very interesting interpretation of this truth through a magnificent poem called the 'Romances'. The setting is in heaven

before the creation of anything, of the world or of the angels and St. John is imagining what the dialogue between the Father and the Son is like when they are thinking about the creation of the universe and this is what the Father says:

“My Son, I wish to give you a bride who will love you. Because of you she will deserve to share our company, and eat at our table.”

The Son answered; “I will show my brightness to the bride you give me, so that by it she may see how great my Father is...I will hold her in my arms and she will burn with your love and with eternal delight she will exalt your goodness.”

Now when the time had come for him to be born, he went forth like the bridegroom from his bridal chamber...

So St. John pierced more deeply into the mystery of Christmas and he found that it wasn't just about birthday candles and cake, but it was about a wedding, a Royal Wedding.

Yet these marriage plans seemed to be thwarted. The bride that the Father had created for his Son no longer loved him because Jesus “came unto his own and his own did not know him.” The beautiful, spotless bride had now become disfigured by sin, enslaved to the powers of the world, enslaved by the power of sin and sentenced to the gruesome separation of body and soul, sentenced to the fate of death.

This is what Isaiah means when he talks about a people who walked in darkness, a people who are burdened by the yoke of sin, a people who have been beaten with the rod of their taskmasters because this people have been taken away or have exchanged their true bridegroom for a false one who leads them to slavery.

We hear in the Gospel of Luke of a certain false bridegroom: Caesar Augustus. Once you understand who he is you unlock a deeper meaning of what St. Luke trying to convey in this passage. Caesar Augustus' father was Julius Caesar whom we all know. He was not truly the son of Julius Caesar but an orphan yet he was a crafty and extremely ambitious politician. After his father had died, he played upon the public sentiment to get the senate to declare his father a god. They were reluctant to do so because they had not declared a dead emperor god before but they did not think it would have been an issue since Julius Caesar was dead already. So they declared Julius Caesar a god and immediately, Caesar

Augustus said: if you declare my father a god then that makes me a son of a god e.g. divine and worthy of worship.

Because he declared himself the son of god, listen to how an ancient historian in 9 BC before the birth of Christ described him:

*The providence which has ordered all things...has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus...sending him as a **savior**, both for us and for our descendants, that he might **end war**...and since the **birth of the god** Augustus was the beginning for the world of the **good news** that came by reason of him.*

Maybe some of these words ascribed to Augustus sound familiar...someone described as a 'son of god' and 'savior' bringing peace by 'ending war' and whose birthday was 'good news' for the world? These are the exact same words St. Luke is using and now we can see how politically subversive it is.

Imagine if Justin Trudeau said this about himself: I am a son of god and the savior of the world, and the announcement of my birthday is the announcement of the good news! Now imagine Fr Jonathan writing a homily in response: Let me tell you who the true Son of God is, let me tell you about the birth of Jesus Christ who is the TRUE Savior bringing peace to people of good will and the gospel, the good news by his birth.

We thought this was a nice, cute story, but now we see how subversive St. Luke is in this Gospel account, how he is saying: you see that false god, that false bridegroom, he is nothing. Look to your true God, your true bridegroom who will come and set you free.

What was supposed to be a wedding at first has now turned into a rescue mission. Jesus saw his bride attacked by sin, broken by death and taken hostage by other false gods, other false bridegrooms and now the time had come.

The time had come for war. The time had come for the Incarnation because it was the beginning of D-Day "for we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). For the Son of God who was at first coming to meet his bride was now running into battle just like Desmond Doss ran into war without any weapons on Hacksaw Ridge rescuing his fellow soldiers. Not fearing the bullets, not fearing the

grenades and bombs exploding around him, he dove headlong into the hellfire of war without a single weapon looking to rescue his fellow soldiers in the Battle of Okinawa, Japan. So too our Savior ran right into the thick of battle against sin and death right HERE.

As Desmond Doss sought out those 75 injured men with his own bare hands lowering them by a rope tied around a tree stump down a high ridge, Hacksaw ridge, so too the Savior of the world seeks for his bride, seeks for his lost sheep carrying them on his shoulder and saving them by the tree stump of the cross lifting them to heaven.

At the point of utter exhaustion and drained of all energy, Desmond Doss prayed as Jesus too prayed to the Father: Lord, help me get one more, Father, help me save the bride you have created for me, help me save her from the clutches of sin and death that I may one day bring her stainless into the mansions of heaven where we will share in the heavenly banquet, where all the hosts of heaven will say:

Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready (Rev 19:6-7)