

Who Is This Child?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 December 2000

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Felix Orji

- [0 : 0 0] Welcome to another Sermon on the Web from St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, Canada.
- You are free to use this mp3 audio file and to redistribute it to others without alteration and without charge. After the sermon, listen for information about St. John's Shaughnessy Church and the St. John's website.
- The following message is from the Christmas morning 2000 service at St. John's Shaughnessy. The Reverend Felix Orgy delivered his message entitled, Who is this child?
- I want to say Merry Christmas to all of you again. Dan had already said that. In Nigeria we say Happy Christmas and it is Father Christmas, not Santa Claus.
- It's somewhat different here. So Merry Christmas to all of you. I would encourage you to open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 1, the epistle to the Hebrews.
- [1 : 2 7] And it's found on page 203 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles. Page 203 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles.
- Page 203 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles.
- Page 204 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles. Page 204 in the New Testament section of your Pew Bibles. And I used to wonder why that pastors in the various churches that have been in did not preach on this particular text.
- And finally, a few weeks ago, I discovered why. And I'll tell you. For a number of years, at least in the middle of the 20th century, some experts in the fields of theology and preaching, some experts in the field of congregational behavior and congregational mood swings, people who think they understand the movement and the change of mood in congregations, have discouraged preachers from preaching on this passage.
- Preaching on this passage, they say, changes the mood and destroys the mood of excitement and joy that ought to characterize Christmas.
- [3 : 1 8] In fact, they contend, most people who come to church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are there to sing Christmas songs and to listen to stories of angels and shepherds and the baby Jesus told with finesse and pathos.
- They come to church to sing Christmas songs and carols and they don't want to listen to a didactic passage such as this. And so they say this kind of passage will turn people off.
- And so if your mood changes in the course of this message, it's because of the text. But I need to say something completely different to you.
- If your mood changes from excitement to boredom, as we look at this passage, it is not because of the passage.
- It's probably because of me, or the lighting in this sanctuary, or the pews that you're sitting on that are very hard.
- [4 : 3 5] We need some cushions. Or it's because of the music or the architecture. It's definitely not because of the passage. In this passage, the writer proclaims to you and to me wonderful truths about Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate today.

The first thing that he tells us is that in the person of Jesus Christ, God has finally spoken to us in a way that is not spoken before.

In Jesus Christ, God has fully revealed himself in a way that God had never done in the ages past.

If you look at your Bible, you realize that all through the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the Bible does say to us that God speaks to us, God proclaims his eternal power and deity by the things that he has created.

As we look at creation, we see a witness to the power and the majesty and the glory and the wisdom of its creator.

[5 : 58] And the psalmist put it very clearly in Psalm 19. He says, The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands, day after day, they pour forth speech, and night after night, they display knowledge.

There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world.

The voice of God, the revelation of God, is being proclaimed in the creation that God himself has made. And as one writer has put it, he says that the cosmic eloquence of God is deafening.

As we look at the cosmos, you hear the voice of God, you hear the eloquence of God, you see the manifestation of the wisdom and the majesty and the power of its creator.

And it is a deafening eloquence. But, many of us do not hear that voice of God in nature.

[7 : 17] Because it is not clear, it's not a very clear voice, even though it is definite. It is fragmentary. And so, God has not only spoken to us and proclaimed his power through nature, God has also spoken to us at many times and in various ways through the prophets.

Through the prophets of the Old Testament, God has spoken his special revelation by visions, by dreams, by symbols, by pantomime and in various manners.

God spoke to Moses on Mount Horeb in the midst of fire. And God has spoken through the thunder, God has spoken in the midst of darkness.

By the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in the wilderness, God revealed himself to the people of God. And as you read the books of the law and the prophecies and the writings in the Bible, you hear the voice of God speaking his word to us.

But as wonderful as God's voice is through the prophets and through nature, that voice is incomplete.

[8 : 46] The word of God, the revelation of God through nature and through the prophets is incomplete. and it is lacking.

And what is lacking in it? It is the incompleteness of the message of divine redemption and divine love and power and the purpose of God for his creation.

All through nature and the prophets, God has not fully revealed his plan and purpose for you and for me. We have not fully seen the fullness of the revelation of God's love and God's grace and mercy for his people.

And this is why in these last days, God has chosen to speak to you and to me through his son, Jesus Christ. Do you want to hear the fullness of God's word to you?

Do you want to know exactly what God wants to say to you? The writer of Hebrews says, in Jesus Christ, we have the ultimate revelation of the goodness and redemption of God.

[10 : 04] It's not only in what Jesus has said, but it's in the totality of the person of Jesus Christ, God has fully revealed himself.

In the circumstances of his conception and his birth, in his preaching and miracles, in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into the heavens, God has fully and finally spoken to us.

and I think it's amazing to think about God speaking to you and to me through his son. Because by speaking to us through his son, Jesus Christ, God is demonstrating the importance of the message that he has for you and for me.

God is demonstrating his generosity to you and to me. God is saying to you and to me that what I want to say to you is important and you are important to me.

And this is why God sent his son to you and to me. God cares for you and for me. I come from Nigeria where things are fairly very traditional and if the chief of a village wants to send a message to a particular village, he will first and foremost send the messengers, some of the elders, to go and proclaim the message.

[11 : 40] And if people do not hear that message or understand it, he will send another messenger. But if the message is not taken, finally, he will send his son.

And that is extraordinary to send your son. And that's what God is doing here. God wants to speak clearly and powerfully to us.

And he wants to demonstrate his generosity to you and to me. And so when we think about Christmas, we're not thinking about the carols and the songs and the wonderful things that happen during this season, what is happening is that the God of the universe has come down in a personal way to speak to us and to draw us to himself through his son.

and I think an important question to ask is what is it that the son is speaking to us? What is it that God is saying through the son to you and to me?

And if I can put it in a sentence, God is speaking his ultimate message, the ultimate word of grace and judgment to you and to me through his son.

[13 : 12] Jesus has come with the gracious word of forgiveness. He has come with the gracious word of reconciliation. He has come to speak the words of divine friendship to you and to me.

He is saying to us, God wants us to be friends once again. And all of this because of God's favor and grace to us.

And so in Jesus Christ all the purpose of God and all the majesty and the glory of God is revealed.

We need not look elsewhere. See, all around us today, there are people looking around wanting to hear the voice of God, wanting to hear a message of love, a message of invitation, wanting to hear a message of peace and comfort.

And God is saying to you this morning that you do not need to look elsewhere. Look to Jesus. In him is the love, the love message of God spoken and being spoken to you this morning.

[14 : 38] The second thing that the writer of this passage wants us to know has to do with the unique and superior identity of the Son of God.

Who is this Son of God? God? Is he an angel? Is he one of the prophets? Extraordinary prophets? Or is he one of the incarnations of God?

God? I read an article just a few weeks ago in which the writer of this article clearly says that Jesus is not the only incarnation of God.

In other words, Jesus is not the only Son of God. There are other sons of God, other incarnations of God. But the truth that the writer wants you and I to know is that Jesus is not just one of the incarnations of God.

He's not just one of the sons of God. He's not even an angel. Jesus, the Son of God, is the one whom God has appointed heir of all things.

[15 : 53] God has given him the inheritance, the whole of the universe, and all those who are redeemed by Jesus Christ himself. Jesus is the one through whom God created all of the universe.

The space and the time and the energy are all created by Jesus Christ. And he is the one that sustains all of the universe by the power of his own word.

He controls everything and he sustains everything. And the writer says that Jesus is the perfect imprint of the Father. In him is revealed the fullness of the glory of God.

He radiates the fullness of God's glory. And so if you want to know anything about God, you look at Jesus. He reveals the fullness of him. And finally he says to us, Jesus Christ is the one who has set us free from our sins.

He purified us from our sins and sat down in the heavens. In the Old Testament, when the priests offered sacrifice, they never sat.

[17 : 15] They were always standing. But in the case of Jesus Christ, when he offered the sacrifice, he sat down. And the implication is clear.

The sacrifice for your sin and my sin is finally complete. There is no more need of a sacrifice. That's why he's sitting down.

It's done. And he said that on the cross, it is finished. And he sat down. There is nothing that your sin can do to destroy the sacrifice of Christ.

Jesus, in his death, has finally dealt the death blow on sin and guilt. And you have no business carrying your sins and guilt all around you.

It's finished. That's what the writer is saying. And that's what Jesus came to do for you and for me. What is the point of the passage?

[18 : 20] The writer is saying to you and to me that because Jesus is the one through whom God has created the universe and because Jesus is the one who sustains the universe because he's the perfect imprint of God and the one who has died for you and ascended into heaven and sat down finally, you and I need to listen to the message that he brings.

He carries the authority of the Father. He carries the authority of his own love for you and for me and we need to listen to his word.

the final truth that we find in this passage is that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ signals the end of the age.

The coming of Christ into this world is a divine signal to you and to me that the end of the age as you see it has come to an end.

By speaking through the son God is saying to us the end has come a new age has come into being. If you remember in the book of Genesis God signaled the beginning of that age by speaking the world into existence through his son who is the eternal word.

[19 : 46] God is signaling God is signaling that beginning by speaking once again to the world through his son.

Get the logic? In the beginning God said let there be light. The Bible tells us in 1 John that the speaking of God in Genesis chapter 1 was the word of God which is Christ who became flesh.

So God spoke to the world and spoke it into being through his word at the beginning and at the end and the beginning of the new age God is speaking once again through his son.

So Christmas is a sign of the end of the old age and the beginning of the new. This is a new world.

It is a world spiritually in which God is saying to you and to me, this age and this world will soon be finished because Jesus is speaking once again.

[21 : 09] And when it is finally finished, you and I will receive the fullness of God's righteousness, the fullness of God's grace, and the fullness of God's eternity, which is called eternal life.

I want to say to you this morning that if you have heard the word of the Father through the Son, Christmas is a time of celebration.

It is a time of gratitude to God for enabling you to hear that word that gives new life. It is a time to rejoice. But if you have not heard the word of the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ, Christmas is a time to listen and receive that word because it is that word that will give you freedom from your sin and from your guilt.

And that's what God is concerned about. God wants to set you free through the word of life, Jesus Christ. And he wants to bring you into the new age, which is the age of redemption, the age of life everlasting.

It is the age that will last forever, not the age that will be destroyed in the near future. My prayer this morning is that God will grant you the grace to rejoice and to listen to him through his son.

[22 : 42] Amen. This MP3 sermon along with many others is available from the St.

John's Shaughnessy website at www.stjohnshaughnessy.org That address is www.stjohnshaughnessy.org On the website you will also find information about ministries, worship services, and special events at St.

John's Shaughnessy. We hope that this sermon on the web has helped you and that you will share it with others. Thank USDA Thank you.