An Infinite Gift in Finite Clothing

John 1:1-14 T Christmas Day

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Everyone knows that the finite isn’t capable of the infinite. Our reason tells us that there are rules of science that matter must follow. For example, when opening presents this morning, one of the presents I opened was a regular sized box – not too big. But opening it up, I knew that there wouldn’t be a new car inside. That’d be insane! You could fit keys to a car in there, but not the whole thing! Or, when I poured my coffee this morning, I knew that I couldn’t fit the entire pot of coffee into my little coffee cup – however much I may actually desire that – because there wasn’t enough space for it!

In other words, there are certain limits to where things can be. I can’t put a whole pot of coffee into a small cup and I can’t fit vehicles into boxes that fit underneath the Christmas tree.

That’s what’s so astounding with the birth of Jesus. Our reason has trouble comprehending how the God of the universe, a God who is outside space and time, completely boundless and without limit – comes at Christmas in such a small package. Yet God was pleased to be bound in flesh and born as a baby. The truth is, God is so big that He can make Himself small. The infinite God can do whatever He desires. He can be where it pleases Him to be and do what pleases Him to do. The infinite God bounds Himself to a finite thing like flesh and blood for His people on Christmas.

I.

God containing Himself to stuff happens all throughout Scripture. His presence was in the tabernacle in the Old Testament reading. But not just anywhere, over a specific place, over the Mercy Seat, which is between the Cherubim. The infinite God breaks into space and time to give His presence to His people in worship.

So, God’s presence with His people wasn’t unique at Christmas. But it certainly takes on a different characteristic. Because the Word of God is a person. The Word was with God at creation. And the Word was God Himself! Without the Word of God creation doesn’t exist. The Word which creates everything we encounter, the one in whom we have life and this life was the light of men – This Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, glory that comes from His Father, our Heavenly Father. He comes with grace and truth.

But this Word wasn’t an abstract idea. It wasn’t a concept. It was a person. It was God. And this word exited from the heavenly realm, and assumed flesh, becoming something that we can touch with our hands, see with our eyes, hear with our ears. He is every bit as we are.

This is the mystery of Christmas. That the fullness of the Godhead comes in the Christ child. That God would incarnate into flesh. It’s really inconceivable – why would God subject Himself to such a thing? It’s like stuffing an entire car into a box underneath the Christmas tree – it doesn’t seem to work. Yet, God worked a miracle, stuffing Himself into the flesh and blood of Jesus so that He may save us from our sins. God comes to us, makes Himself accessible for us, so that we can see the glory of God.

II.

But it’s a hard concept to grasp. As a result, a big thing in a small package gets overlooked. We see it for what we perceive it to be– which is just a small package – instead of what it truly is. Jesus gets overlooked as true God. Even ignored. For instance, we know God is bigger than the world. But one man, Jesus, is just a speck on the earth. So it seems impossible that a God who is bigger than the entire creation could fit Himself, wholly and entirely, into a person?

This is a tough concept, but an important concept. It’s a concept that the first 400 years of the church spent time discussing – just who exactly is Jesus? How can the flesh and blood of one body contain God? How could someone like Mary, be the Mother of God? How can the infinite be contained in the finite? How can God’s presence, wisdom, power, holiness, righteousness, and goodness be contained in a helpless and powerless baby?

This isn’t something natural for us to believe in. And it isn’t something intuitive to the realm of natural theology and how God has made the earth – how the majesty of Creation points to the handiwork of God. Nonetheless, the glory, might, power, and presence of the infinite God is grasped in the finite man Jesus.

III.

So, why did God do this? Become a finite creature? Well, so that by faith, we may receive Him. That we, as finite creatures, may have the infinite God who took on flesh to dwell with sinful man. The word of God, the glory of God, and God’s grace and truth came to be with you – was born in a manger for you, worked miracles on earth to reveal Himself to you, suffered the torment of the cross for you, descended into hell for you, yet rose victorious from the grave for you. This is why God became finite. This was His plan all along – so that He could purchase and win you from sin, death, and devil, and make you a people of His own possession.

And so, God even becomes finite still today. His presence, His glory, and His re-creative Word veils themselves now not in flesh and blood in the person of Jesus, but they’re veiled through water, bread, and wine.

Baptism marks you a disciple of God. It’s where God has claimed you to be His own possession. Because in baptism, He ignores the rule, that the finite cannot contain the infinite. Because God comes to fill finite creatures like you and me with a simple, small package: water and some words. Yet, in this small package, the Lord gives the infinite, He gives His infinite salvation and eternal life. He washes away all sin and writes your name in the eternal book of life.

And then He gives us His teaching. The Word made flesh comes to us in His words and communicates to us the fullness of His infinite glory using finite words. He comes to communicate these things: repentance, forgiveness, teaching, rebuke, instruction, warning, and consolation. He communicates these eternal and weighty things in small packages – like the messengers of His glorious Word.

Then in Holy Supper, the Lord fits His infinite glory, majesty, power, forgiveness, and presence into finite bread and wine. His infinite and boundless Word He attaches to the bread and wine. And us finite creatures are left to ask, “how can a bite of bread and a sip of wine grant the forgiveness of sins? And give the infinite and eternal things like eternal life?” But ultimately, we rely on this: this infinite God who allows Himself to be contained to these finite things, He can accomplish these things if He wishes. And He does! His Words tell us as much, and all we’re left to say is, “Amen.”

So, we remember this Christmas not to doubt that God can send huge things in small packages. And we aren’t to discredit or discount the things which God puts in small packages, lest we overlook and ignore the glory of God which comes in the flesh and blood of Jesus, in the waters of Holy Baptism, in the rebuking, yet forgiving and instructive words of Christ, and in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper.

Thanks be to God that the little packages contain infinite gifts – including the one little baby Jesus who was born for you, to be wrapped up and bound in swaddling clothes. He chose this so that He may reveal His glory to you! So, don’t rule out the magnificent and miraculous thing that the incarnation is. Don’t rule out God because you think he’s too big to fit where he’s told you He is. Because He is where He wants to be, to give you the things He wants to give you – He wants to give you the infinite things which He has, so that you may be with Him forever. That’s your gift this Christmas – both to receive and to give.

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