

**December 20, 2000**  
**Advent 4**

*"The Christmas Story According to Jesus"*

**HEBREWS 10:5-10**

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**T**herefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" <sup>8</sup> First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). <sup>9</sup> Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Yesterday at our Christmas for Kids we showed the children how familiar sights and sounds and smells of Christmas remind us of the blessings we have through Jesus. The lights we see on the trees and the smell of candles burning remind us that Jesus is the light of the world and we don't have to fear eternal death and darkness. The green trees and wreaths with their fresh smells remind us of the new life we have in Christ our Savior. The red flowers, and the red bows remind us of the blood of Jesus that washes us clean from our sin. The white reminds us of being pure and holy in God's sight through Jesus. The gold reminds us of the precious eternal blessings we have forever in our Savior.

Just as we use wreaths and candles and bells and colors of red and green to point to Jesus birth, the Lord used pictures to point his Old Testament people to the blessings Jesus the Messiah and Savior would offer. The people saw the animals sacrificed and smelled them burning at the altars. They saw the priest sprinkle blood on the altar and carry the blood into the most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. All of these things were shadows or pictures of Jesus' once for all sacrifice for the sins of the world. Once Jesus completed this perfect sacrifice, these pictures or shadows or copies were no longer necessary.

How did Jesus feel about coming to this earth to offer this sacrifice for us? Jesus tells how he feels about coming to save us in Psalm 40 and this is quoted again in the words just read to you. This is the Christmas story according to Jesus. You are familiar with account in Luke 2 that begins with the well known words, "And it came to pass in those days...., and the account in Matthew that tells of the coming of the wise men to worship Jesus, or the familiar words of John 1, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." On this Sunday before Christmas come with me and listen to this amazing Christmas story according to Jesus.

**Jesus knew what the Father wanted him to do**

Listen to how Jesus tells us how he knew exactly what the heavenly Father wanted him to do. "Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said; 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.'" When Jesus came into this world he knew that his heavenly Father did

not expect him to join the priests in Jerusalem and offer animal sacrifices that pictured what was to come. There was nothing wrong with these sacrifices. They served a good purpose to point to the sacrifice Jesus would make, but once Jesus made the perfect sacrifice for sin, they were no longer necessary. The decorations in your home beautifully point to Jesus birth for a short time, but when Christmas is over the decorations come down. The opening words in this chapter of Hebrews tell us these things were a shadow of what was to come, but not the reality, just as we worship Jesus at Christmas not the decorations that point to him.

Jesus tells us that he knew exactly what the heavenly Father had planned for him when he came to this earth with the words, "But a body you prepared for me." Jesus actually looked forward to have a body prepared for him by his heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary and caused a child to be conceived in her womb that was God's Son from all eternity. If I take this pitcher full of water, and try and pour it into this little cup that would prove to be impossible. God's Son put himself into the body of human being. We call this the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The words from the gospel of John are so clear. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." In the Nicene Creed we confess this mighty miracle with the words, "For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became full human."

Why did Jesus come down to this earth to become one of us? Was it just to understand our human condition? That was part of it. He was familiar with all our weakness, and is able to sympathize and understand our problems and troubles. When his good friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept at his tomb. Jesus shed tears just as we shed tears when we say goodbye to someone we love. He went through all the problems little babies experience just as you did. He knew what hard work was like just as you do. A few years ago a reporter in New York did an article on the homeless people. She dressed up as a bag lady and lived that way for several weeks, just to see how people treated her. Jesus came down to this earth and he knows what we feel. The book of Hebrews tells us that we "do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." As we sing in the hymn, "Jesus knows our every weakness." He became one of us.

As beautiful as it is to see Jesus take on our human body and experience all our problems and troubles there is an even more important reason why Jesus tells us joyfully how the heavenly Father prepared a body for him. Look at the body of Jesus walking on this earth, the body the Father prepared for him. See him live the perfect life in that body that you and I could never live. Listen to the heavenly Father say to his Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." There is something about this Christmas season that has a way of underlining all our faults and imperfections and sin that cry out for God's judgment. Jesus never had an angry moment with his mom and dad, or fought with a brother or sister, or wanted to hurt someone who hurt him. His purpose was to provide us with his body and his life and his righteousness that we could never find in ourselves. That is why we love the name given to Jesus Old Testament, "The Lord our righteousness."

Look more closely at the little body of Jesus lying in a manger in Bethlehem. See that little body growing up to be a man, hanging on the cross, suffering and dying for the sins of the whole world. As we sing in the hymn, "Nail, spear will pierce him through, the cross he'll

bear for me and you." Our heavenly Father did not desire more burnt offerings and sin offerings from Old Testament priests. He desired to have his Son sacrificed in our place with his blood so we could have the glory of being his dear children in this life and for all eternity. There is a definite connection between the red we see at Christmas, the white, and the gold. You are privileged to know that your Father prepared the body of Jesus as a sacrifice so you could be forgiven and be his children forever. Think of how many people sincerely believe that Christmas is primarily about giving and sharing as a way to earn God's favor. "Here by the grace of God go I."

When I was a pastor in Santa Barbara, one of the members asked me at Christmas an interesting theoretical question. "If I were the only person in the whole world who had ever sinned, would God have sent his Son down to this human flesh and have him sacrificed on the cross, just for me?" Draw a circle around yourself with this large piece of chalk. If you were the only one who had lost perfection and sinned against my Father, would God have sent his Son into the world just for you? Listen again to Jesus speak to you and hear him say to his Father, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire but a body you have prepared for me." He prepared his body just for you and just for me.

### **Jesus eagerly did what the Father wanted him to do**

Let's listen more to this Christmas story according to Jesus. Listen to how he feels about coming to this earth to rescue us. Listen to him joyfully say, "Here I am-it is written about me in the scroll-I have come to do your will O God." Don't you get a little tired of questions that focus on feelings? "How do you feel about losing your home in fire?" asks the reporter. But with Jesus we want to know how he felt about coming to this world. He speaks to the Father and says, "Here I am- it is written about me in the scroll- I have come to do your will O God."

Think back to a time when your mom or dad asked you to help with the dishes or carry out the garbage. Did you always have the joy in your voice that said, "Sure mom, I'd love to help you with dishes?" Or did you say, "It's not my turn?" Jesus willingly and joyfully jumped at the chance to do his Father's will. What if you were going in for major heart surgery and in your visit with the surgeon he complained about how much he does not like his work, and he cannot wait to retire. I think you would have second thoughts about that person doing the surgery

Jesus thrilled to the opportunity of doing the Father's will and doing it perfectly. Jesus once told his disciples, "My food is to do the will of him sent me." The night before he died Jesus prayed to his Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you have given me." When Jesus went up to the cross do suffer for us the book of Hebrews tells us, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross and the shame." Even as a twelve year old boy he told his parents, "I must be about my Father's business."

Look at the face of the baby Jesus lying in the manger of Bethlehem. He is so beautiful and so precious as little babies are. Now look at the face of Jesus going up to Jerusalem for us. Look at the determination on his face as he carries out everything the Father asked him today. These words this morning tell us, "And by that will we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all." Have you ever seen a great athlete

almost will the ball into the basket? Have you ever seen someone just will themselves to get hard job done and do it well? No matter how hard we try, we can never will ourselves to overcome the debt of sin we owe our God. That is why God prepared a body for Jesus so that he could focus himself on saving us. "He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay." By that will we have been made holy and acceptable to our God. This is the Christmas story according to Jesus.

All these decorations at Christmas are so beautiful, the trees, the flowers, the lights and the gifts. They remind us this morning of the Christmas story according to Jesus. How eager and yes happy he was to offer his body for us so we can spend eternity with him with real glorified resurrected bodies in the real and beautiful place he has prepared for us. Amen.