



Christmas Eve 2009

The Life

Tonight we celebrate the birth of life. For that is who Christ Jesus is. Not a holy man among holy men, or the holiest of all men. Not a man of nearly mythical proportions, but of life. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. Jesus is the life of all living things. For all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. Yet He is not only the life of all the living. He is also the life of all people. For in Him is life. But even more, our Lord Jesus Christ is the life of all those who wish to live through death. For whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. If there is no Jesus, then there is no life. For most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Life is who and what is born of the Virgin Mary, wrapped in strips of cloth, and laid in a manger. Not just any life, but life Himself, life in the flesh.

So let us rejoice! This is the birthday of life. Death may still lurk in the corners and stalk about; it still seeks to scare us into sin and urge us to live for ourselves. But death cannot hold a candle to life. For Christ has given us His Word when He says, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die”** (John 11:25–26).

“Do you believe this?” That is what Life asks you. For everything hinges on you recognizing Life for who He really is. And everything hinges not only on you getting a grip on Life, but on receiving Life as He gives Himself to you. For He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Christ, our life.

So often we believe that life is what we make of it. So we work hard to get the most out of life, afraid that life will pass us by, sure

that we will not live life to the fullest, and convinced that life will give us a raw deal.

But Life was not born on this day to cheat you out of anything. He comes that you may have life, and that you may have it abundantly. He is not simply born. Life becomes flesh so that He might lay down His life. And greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. Yet Jesus is born to be more than a friend, more than someone to turn in crisis, more than someone to gripe to or wish from. He is your life. To be that, He is born in flesh like yours. Then He gives His life—all so that He might take it up again and give it into you.

So our Lord Jesus Christ was **“in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”** (John 1:10–13).

Did you hear that? Another birth. Not just the birth of Life on Christmas Day, but your own birth, your new birth, through Life, by Life, in Life. For our Lord and our Life is born, not simply to take on flesh like yours with all its aches and pains. Our Lord and Life also desires to be born in your flesh and to live your life even while you live His life.

So today is not just about Jesus. It is about your life—your life which is hidden with Christ in God. *Where is it hidden?* In Christ. *How?* By this new birth, this being “born of God” which takes place in the waters of Holy Baptism. *And what does that get you?* He lives in you, and you live in Him.

Listen carefully, then, to how Life describes your life in Him:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:4–8)

So let us truly and heartily and with full joy give thanks to God the Father, through His Son, in the Holy Spirit. For in His great love for us, the true and only God has not left us dead in our trespasses and sins. Instead, He has brought us to life in Christ Jesus. And that life began when Life Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. And through Baptism, with the eyes of faith, we now get to behold His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And having seen and received and tasted the Lord of life, understand and believe what dignity and worth you have received. For you do not have just any old life. Life Himself has you, holds you to Himself, and gives you His own holiness, worthiness, righteousness, and dignity. Be mindful of whose Life you have so that you do not fall back into your living death. And be glad that Life has been born for you, even as He has been born in you. Amen.