

Please Visit Us!

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Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid....” (Luke 2:9-10)

In his book titled *The Last Battle*, C.S. Lewis states that an awareness of Divine Holiness in our midst brings both a mixture of mental reflection and emotional reaction in the deep places of our souls. Furthermore, he contends that one constant emotion occasioned by encountering the Divine Presence is frightening fear: “And the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified” (Luke 2:9).

Let us reflect upon the presence of God in our midst and try to imagine our emotional response to the divine presence among us today. Think about it. If we had the option of allowing or not allowing God to look straight into our souls, would we cherish this opportunity or be frightened by it? I think we would be scared to death of full disclosure. For you see, in God’s presence we are exposed for who and what we really are, no evasions, no excuses, no escapes. But wouldn’t such exposure be an invasion of our privacy? And isn’t this one of our cherished constitutional protections? No, we will not willingly surrender our independence to any human being nor to even our Divine Creator unless there is absolutely no way to avoid such an encounter.

Besides, aren’t we at times a little hostile toward God? Don’t we remember that we didn’t receive what we asked for, what we desperately needed at a given time in our lives? And isn’t it true that we have had a small grudge against God because God didn’t give us what we thought we desperately needed? Yes, let’s confess it. Some of us have a covert, silent hidden rage against the Almighty. We are angry with God, but fear God at the same time.

“Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid....’”

Now let us return to C.S. Lewis’s observation. When we look into the face of God (how awesome), the constant emotion we feel is fear. But we need to know that God doesn’t want us to be afraid of Him, for fear immobilizes us. We are frozen and can do nothing good for Him, or for that matter, for ourselves. “God is love, and perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Can we really grasp this truth, hold on to it, and wrestle it to the ground until the angel blesses us?

Well, this is precisely what the frightened shepherds on the Judean hillside succeeded in doing. For in spite of their initial fear, they pressed on, after hearing the angel’s reasons for telling them they had no reason to fear any longer.

“I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born

this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

When they heard these words, knowing that they and all people needed a deliverer, they worked through their intimidating fear to a tentative statement of faith. They cried out in desperation, “Please Visit Us....” You know the rest of the story, but let’s listen to the message of the angelic choir, as they sang to the shepherds that night:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” (Luke 2:14)

Someone has asked the question: “Is this angelic song only a hymn from some far distant past, only a sweet memory of the first Christmas?” Or is it not the original Christmas song, which we all may copy in our own lives and in our world today?

Do not be terrified, for God is here with us. (His name shall be called Emmanuel.) He is here at Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and throughout the entire journey of our individual lives.

What is the meaning of Advent, *Ad Venio*? It means God has graciously decided to visit us and stay with us. Yes, if we but ask him, He will stay with us for the long haul! Will we join the shepherds and honestly cry out for the Savior in our time? Do we honestly cry out – “Please Visit Us?”

First and foremost, advent is personal! Did we realize there is an individual advent for each of us, if we will make room for the heavenly visitant in our daily journey? For what is regeneration if it is not the beginning of the Divine life within us? (Nicodemus had to learn this, so perhaps we can also.) When we are born anew by the presence of the Lord Jesus in us, God’s displeasure with us is turned away, and God’s peace begins to take place in our lives.

Now this is no cheap, easy task for God. Our regeneration and salvation are terribly expensive! A cross looms ahead in the not too distant future, on which His son will die...for us. And then (amazing grace) he permits us to spread our testimony about Him throughout His world.

Yes, the angel of the Lord made known this glorious news to ordinary shepherds, common, hard working people, first and foremost. And we love the shepherds because they did not hesitate to investigate this angelic announcement. They responded in action: “Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us....”

They provide such a blessed example for us. We are rational, calculating people in some areas of life. But the shepherds’ response was immediate. No doubt, no vain questions asked. They needed (as we do) the blessings of a visit from God. God has sent them a wonderful message, and they had to authenticate it for themselves. And they did; they saw the Baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Then they “returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them” (Luke 2:20).

But now we are 2000 years beyond this first Christmas. Yet our cry is the same as the original shepherds, might be the same as the shepherds: “Lord Jesus, Please Visit Us again. For we are in gross darkness, we desperately need good news of peace and joy for all of your people. Please Visit Us in so many places where deliverance is needed at right now:

Please Visit Us in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the blood of the innocent young is being shed on all sides, in conflicts which seem irresolvable.

Please Visit Us in the Middle East. Help us deal, even-handedly and with fairness with all parties involved in this conflict. It has lasted so long.

Please Visit Us in Iran, Korea, and other locations where nuclear weaponry seems to be a major priority, signaling death, not life.

Please Visit Us in the Sudan, where men in Darfur are driven from their villages and killed or placed in refugee camps, their daughters and wives raped and abused every day.

Please Visit Us in the United States, where in so many instances, there is little peace, safety, or security.

Visit all places where children are killing children, where weapons of lethal destruction are far too available.

Please Visit Us in homes where there is domestic violence against spouses, children, and the elderly.

Please Visit Us wherever hate groups form and mob rule would prevail.

Please Visit Us and help us change our attitudes and relinquish rigid ideologies that work against the love of God for all of us.

We know the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Please visit us and show us how to love and live with each other.

Love Divine, all love excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down.

Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art.

Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Please visit us. We are not ready, but please come anyhow! We need You now!
Amen.