

Paul Monologue

As I wrote to my brothers and sisters in Christ at the church in Ephesus, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... for he has made known to us ... the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

By God’s grace we are laborers together for Christ.

Like you, I was not in Bethlehem the night he was born. I am Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus. He chose me before the foundation of the world to serve him and all his saints. My calling is to preach to all the salvation that has come to us. For though we were far from God, Christ has come near. Though we were separated from God in times past, a new time has come. This new time has dawned with the rising of God’s Son, and now forgiveness and redemption and grace shine upon all God’s children – Jew and Greek, men and women, slave and free!

Such a gospel! Such Good News! And such a mystery, that God would love us so much – I know God’s love first hand. God offered his love even to me, though I helped put to death many of the first children of the light. But by that grace, God has commended forgiveness to me, to all of us – God loves us! God has not paid any of us our rightful wage, rather God has awarded us undeserved favor. Such is the gospel of Good News. Such is the mystery of God.

Of that gospel, I, Paul, am a minister. To that mystery, I am a witness. I witness to what I have not seen, but which I believe: that God sent his Son to be born of a woman, to die of men for us all; that Jesus Christ was faithful to the task God had ordained: that he took on the form of a servant, was found in human form, and humbled himself to death, even death on a cross.

I preach nothing save Christ and him crucified. Still, I cannot think of his death without remembering his resurrection. I cannot remember his resurrection without considering his ascension. I cannot consider his ascension without proclaiming his coming again. And I cannot proclaim his coming again without returning to the first and greatest mystery of all – the mystery of his first coming – the mystery of his birth. For me, I cannot view the manger unless it is cast in the shadow of the cross.

Great is the paradox – God taking on human form and sharing in the weakness and limitation of all creatures!

Great is the paradox – The Creator of the world came homeless into his creation – even being carried into Egypt, the place of his people’s bondage and sacrifice, to find freedom and safety.

Great is the paradox – The Redeemer of the world, forsaken by those he came to save; Light of the world, snuffed out by sinful darkness!

Yet behold the mystery –

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The prophet, silent, that the Word might truly be heard.
The priest, sacrificed, that sin might truly be forgiven.
The King, a servant, that God's reign might truly begin.

And the Word of God has been entrusted to us, that we might share with all the truth of God's mysterious and wonderful love.

Like you, I was not in Bethlehem the night he was born. I didn't see the star, yet it conquered the darkness of my soul nonetheless. I didn't see his birth, but at that very moment he began to be born in me.

I was not there to greet Mary and Joseph; but they protected and nurtured my salvation.

I didn't see Simeon or Anna, but their faith remains a rich bequest to all who would inherit the gospel.

I didn't travel with Jesus or see even one miracle. But I have gone many miles with him since, and he with me. I am doing what I never imagined – preaching *him* whom I persecuted.

Why? For the reward I shall receive? No! I do what I never imagined because I have already received. My life is a thanksgiving for the grace that has come, the grace that came that night in Bethlehem and that day just outside Jerusalem.

For that grace I am thankful, and by that grace I am saved. Thanks be to God for his wondrous grace!

For God's grace changed my life ... that is the message *I* am called to go and tell.

And God's grace is what can change this world ... that is the message *we* are called to go and tell.

While we may not have seen Him with our own eyes, may we never forget that we can see him through the eyes of faith – we live in a world which proclaims “seeing is believing” however faith reminds us that “believing is seeing.” – May we never stop believing!

And now to him who sent his Son to save us, to God alone be honor and glory and dominion and power throughout the ages.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.