Christmas Message in John’s Gospel

John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Two weeks ago, we studied the Christmas message in Romans through Michael’s message. Through his message we learned that Jesus came to save sinners and bring peace to men. It is fresh and interesting to study the Christmas message from other gospels such as the book of John and Mark along with Matthew and Luke. Today we will study the Christmas message from the book of John. John did not describe the birth of Christ in detail with chronological order or based on 5W1H as Matthew and Luke did. Still, we find a Christmas story from John’s gospel as we did from the book of Romans.

First, incarnation. John describes the birth of Christ in a different way. He said in John 1:14 that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He said that the ‘Word’ which is ‘*logos*’ in Greek, became a person. Here the Word is not just a mere speaking word, but it is the Prima Causa, the first cause of the whole universe. In other words, the Word is the Creator God who is the source of life and the universe. In Jn 1:14 John meant that the Creator God became a man. This incarnation was not only John’s belief but the prophet Isaiah’s. Isaiah, who lived during 700 BC, prophesied about the incarnation in this, “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.” (Is 9:6) Isaiah prophesied the birth of a baby. How could a baby become our Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace? Both John and Isaiah talked about the incarnation, which means that God became a man. God was born as a human baby in a manger in Bethlehem 2020 years ago, who is Jesus Christ.

Second, he was born to die. No one is born with purpose. Is there anyone here who wanted to be born? No, we are just born. But Jesus was born with a purpose, which was to die. Jesus said in John 10:11, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*.” Before he died on the cross, Jesus predicted his death for his sheep. He also said in Mark 10:45, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” Jesus said that he came to die to save many lives. Jesus repeated this message again and again. “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*.” (Jn 10:10) Jesus was born not only to give us life, but also to have it to the fullest. Here, life is *zoe* in Greek, which is different from *bio*. *Bio* means physical life which other animals share, but *zoe* means spiritual life, eternal life, a satisfying and fulfilling life, which only human beings who have the image of God can share. Man cannot live on bread alone. This means that man is not happy with just eating and drinking for physical satisfaction. Man desires for a meaningful and spiritual life which satisfies the body and soul. This indicates *zoe,* which Jesus provides. Jesus promised to give *zoe* to the people. Nicodemus visited Jesus at night because he was not happy with his bio life. He did not have *zoe* because he was not born again. Jesus taught him to be born again to have *zoe*. A Samaritan woman had five husbands, and still she was not satisfied with her bio life. Jesus helped her to repent her sins and drink the living water for *zoe*. Jesus taught us how to have life and to have it to the fullest. Jesus promised to give us eternal life and died for our eternal lives. Jesus was born to die for our *zoe*, eternal life and life in heaven.

Third, Jesus emptied himself. Last Monday I took the guests from DC and visited the Basilica Cathedral in West Central End. The cathedral is known as the largest mosaic church in the world and one of beauty and majesty. In the center of the sanctuary there is a canopy with the statues of the 12 disciples who are adorned with pompous robes and crowns. The walls surrounding them are decorated with glittering golden mosaic paintings. Contrary to these luxurious surroundings, there is a small white marble statue of Jesus on the cross in the center of the canopy. Jesus on the cross is naked, skinny, looks shabby and is isolated from the luxurious and golden surroundings. When I looked at Jesus on the cross, one word came into my mind which is, “selflessness.’

People hate selfish people. Selfish people think only for themselves. We don’t like selfish people, but we are selfish. So, we are destined to live in this selfish world. This selfish generation causes lots of problems in family, community, society, nation, and world. In fact, selfishness is the root of all evilness. Greed, lust, jealousy, pride, and violence are all caused by selfishness. Jesus was born to die for our selfishness. He was selfless to die for our selfishness. People don't want to step down from their position. But Jesus, even though he is the Son of God, emptied himself and stepped down from the heavenly throne and came to this lowly world as a man. Paul described Jesus’ selflessness in Philippians 2:5-8. “*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross*!” In short, God became a man. This is more than a man becoming a cockroach. Man is sinful, so he or she wants to become God. They want to live and act like God in their home, workplace, and so on. But God emptied his pride and position and was born as a man, who is Jesus.

Buddha taught his disciples selflessness. Buddha’s selflessness is for oneself, himself or herself, not for others. If you empty your desire, you will have peace of mind. If you give up your selfishness, you will be happy. But Jesus’ selflessness is not for himself, but for others. Jesus did not consider himself like others. He made himself nothing to give sinners something. When Jesus was hung on the cross, his enemies ridiculed him saying, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and save yourself.” And others said, “He saved others, but can’t save himself.” (Mt 27:40-42) Yes, Jesus didn’t save himself to save others. This is the core of selflessness.

In the past Paul bragged about his luxurious career such as his family line, tradition, education, achievement, and so on. Today people also brag about how much money they make, how much they studied, and how many bedrooms they live in. But they often forget what kind of person they are. After meeting Jesus, Paul was changed. Paul did not brag about what he did and what he had, but bragged about how he became a selfless person because of Jesus. He said that he considered all the worldly things as trash because he considered the knowing Christ as the most valuable treasure in his life. (Php 3:7-10)

Since I got heart surgery, God emptied myself from many desires for this world. I enjoyed playing soccer twice a week. I did not enjoy losing whatsoever. But, since I became sick, I gave up playing soccer. Money and human recognition did not become big for me. All these became useless and worthless when I walked through the dark valley of death. God emptied my *bio* desire for the sake of *zoe*. God taught me how to live a selfless life through Jesus. Paul reminds me of Jesus’ life in Galatians 2:20, “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*.” Amen!

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year through Jesus who lived a selfless life from cradle to cross. I pray for all of us to live happy and abundant *zoe* as we learn about Jesus, who renounced the heavenly glory and was born in a manger. Amen!