

Christmas Eve – 2022

Isaiah 9:2-7

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

Amnesia is a real thing. It's weird but it's real. Amnesia is the loss of memories. It's not exactly dementia or Alzheimer's but it's definitely related. Imagine, not knowing who you are. I was concussed in 6th grade. Tackle football, boys having fun, and Doug Archibald drilled me into the ground. I was knocked out for a time and woke with a raging headache. I pedaled home as fast as I could, crying the whole way, walked through the door and promptly blacked out. In the hospital they asked me my name. Clay Thompson, I said (a classmate's name). Nope; try again Sonny. I woke the next day, right as rain, but wondering what the heck I was doing in a hospital bed.

Imagine being stuck there; imagine being stuck thinking that you were Clay Thompson. Humanity has a problem with amnesia. It is often a chosen affliction, a self-inflicted forgetfulness that clouds man's mind. What is the one thing that we are so desperate to forget? God; we choose to forget God and we lose our identity. Our culture has been concussed, drilled into the ground by those who have forgotten who they are and are hell-bent on either forcing or enticing others to forget. We were made in the image of God. In love, God created humanity to participate in His life. "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). That is never going to change and yet so many want to forget, to actively deceive others into believing that they are Clay Thompson. Vain philosophy, empty speculation posing as science, critical theory dancing its godless jig in our schools – amnesia is very much en vogue. Are we happier? Are we kinder, wiser, or more just?

Our identity crisis is real. Who am I? Do we in the 21st Century know who we are better than our grandmothers and grandfathers knew who they were? Who am I? Divorce, addiction, and God's diminishing place in one's life – it's like being concussed and it's no fun. Who am I? In so many ways, we deliberately choose to forget who we are. That is sin – actively choosing something contrary to who we are and actively choosing the misery that comes with it. To our eternal benefit, God is not keen on being forgotten. Amnesia is something that His love is determined to overcome. Who are we? Some would look into a mirror to construct an answer. What kind of answer does that generate? It generates a narcissistic answer. Do you believe that narcissism is the gateway to joy, the gateway to fulfillment and love? I want to know who I am and only God tells me.

A great host of angels streamed from heaven to praise the living God: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14). The marvel of the Son of God being born compelled the angels to announce His glory. The Ruler of the cosmos has come to a little town in Judea, Bethlehem, and is now wrapped in swaddling cloths. The angel of the Lord (מלאך יהוה) was the preacher that night. The Gospel hit the shepherds with its joyful force and those shepherds ran. With haste, they raced to find the Son of God lying in a manger. In that infant is hidden *all* of the omnipotence of Mighty God. *All* of God's wisdom and His eternal nature and His limitless dominion – all of it – lay hidden in that baby boy. Immanuel; God with us; and this is how He comes to us; vulnerable, meek. Redemption from

sin is in that Child – with His blood He will buy us back. Death will be defeated by this Child – this Holy yet vulnerable Child has come to confront death. His holiness will flow from Him toward us – He will give us new life, a new nature. We don't look into a mirror to figure out who we are; we look into a manger, we look at a crucified Messiah, and we look at an altar.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). It is only sinners who need a Savior. Jesus isn't born for the righteous; He's born for us who flirt with amnesia, who forget who God is and thus forget who we are. At Jesus' birth, God is speaking to us. Remember; I am the Lord your God who made you in my image and now I am coming to you in your flesh and bone. Forgiveness, life, and heaven are mine and I have come to give them to you. Here is my Son, my only Son, whom I love. Look at Him and see me; see my grace; see my devotion to you; see my love and by looking upon Him remember who you are and rejoice that you are mine. Amnesia will not take our faith. Amnesia will not take this night. The world over rejoices this night because we know who we are – beloved sons and daughters of God who have been given a Savior, Christ the Lord.

It's easy to forget. Life with its hustle and bustle and all of us on the go and the world changing so fast and most of us are pulled in a million different directions. Troubles mount, expectations are unmet and we look for something to fill the void, we look to the next buzz or more followers or more likes or just more. It's easy to forget. “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). How much is that forgotten? “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Jesus giving us His body to eat and His blood to drink is forgotten amidst the demands of living. “Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32). She too, as an icon of those who look back longingly on all that is forsaken, Lot's wife is not remembered; she is forgotten. It's easy to forget. The women who went to Jesus' tomb were overwhelmed. The Lord's promises had been forgotten. Mary Magdalene was concussed, driven into the ground by seeing Jesus crucified. Blood, agony, helplessness – it was all so tragically wrong. But God doesn't leave amnesia to do its unholy work. Again, an angel was the preacher: “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. And they remembered his words” (Luke 24:5-8).

I don't want to forget who I am. Jesus is risen from the dead and that tells me who I am. Death has no mastery over our Lord; death has no mastery over us. More than any other reality, Jesus' resurrection tells you who you are. I don't want to forget who I am. But it's true, my sinful flesh loves giving me amnesia. On my ear I hear Jesus say: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). And I remember – that's who I am because that's who He is and I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, born in Bethlehem and crucified on a cross outside of Jerusalem. He remembers me! He remembers you. Born for you, lived for you, died for you, rose for you – that's who you are, that's who you will always be. You are a disciple Jesus Christ – who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. You have been crucified with Christ and you no longer live but Christ lives in you and the life you live in the body you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself up for you (Galatians 2:20). That's who you are. People will continue to forget but not me; not you!

You are loved by God. That's who you are. You are human, consecrated by God Himself becoming man. What you are, God willingly became, completely like us yet without sin (Hebrews 4:14-16). All women's wombs are consecrated by Jesus' taking up residence in Mary's womb. All water was consecrated when Jesus descended into the Jordan and was baptized. All of our graves are consecrated because Jesus took His Sabbath rest in a garden tomb. Out of extraordinary love, God became man. This is not an abstract love – He came into this physical world and He allowed spikes to pierce His flesh. His tomb is empty and it will always be empty. There is no amnesia in this holy house. Christmas is alive in this place and forgetfulness is put to flight. A manger holds the Son of God and we are saved from our sin. We remember.