

INI - SDG

1<sup>st</sup> Mid-Week Advent Service

“The Colors of Christmas”

December 3, 2008

Hecla

Text: Romans 5:12, 18

Theme: The Colors of Christmas - GREEN

- Life lost by sin

- Life given by Christ

Dear fellow pilgrim partners who have come to worship and adore Him, Christ the Lord,

One of the things that makes Christmas the most wonderful time of year has to be the decorations. Of all the holidays we celebrate as a nation and as a church, none are as colorful as Christmas. We have the different colored ornaments on the tree, different colored decorations in our yards, and different colored lights. Likewise there are probably outfits you have in your closet that have colors which you would only be seen in at Christmas time.

Why do you suppose there are so many bright and beautiful colors used at Christmas? One reason probably has to do with the time of year that Christmas is celebrated. Here in the northern plains Christmas comes during a pretty lifeless time of year. By December the leaves on the trees have long since died and fallen off and white snow covers the ground. The crops have been harvested from fields and gardens. The growing season has ceased for another year. There isn't much color in the landscape surrounding us - so we bring color into our homes and yards with our Christmas decorations.

For the Christian there is a much better reason for having such colorful decorations at Christmas time. Our sole focus at Christmas time is the birth of the Christ-child, our Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. One way we celebrate is by decorating our homes and our churches. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior and King this year I would direct your attention to three colors that are predominant at Christmas time - green, red, and white. Tonight we will consider the color green.

Look around at our decorations at church and see how much the color green is used. Think of your homes - how was the color green used there? Our Christmas trees are green. Our wreaths and garland are green. Some of the bulbs on the tree are green. Maybe you have that green sweater in your closet that you wear only for Christmas. Why green? Well remember again what time of year this is - winter. Winter in which there isn't a lot of green to be seen around us. We are in the dead of winter, when plant life is dormant. Green, however, is the color of life. For Christmas trees we use one of the only trees that stays green and looks like it has life in it throughout the year.

So let us consider the Christmas color of green tonight as we examine life that was lost by sin, but is given by Christ. To aid us in our study we turn to the God-breathed words of Romans chapter 5, reading verses 12 and 18 - ***...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned – Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.***

## LIFE LOST BY SIN

One of the strangest feelings I've ever experienced was during my first Christmas in California. Spending my whole life as a Mid-Westerner I had come to associate certain things with Christmas. I was used to short days, sub-freezing temperatures, trees with no leaves, and snow on the ground. But this was not the case in California. While the days did grow shorter and temperatures dropped into the 50's, most of the trees kept their leaves and there were always the palm trees to remind me that I wasn't in the Mid-West anymore. Furthermore, the hills surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area that were golden in the summer because of the lack of rain, became a beautiful shade of green with the winter rains. Needless to say, this was not something I had been accustomed to at Christmas time as a child!

We experience no such greenery at Christmas time here in the Dakotas. By December 25 the dead of winter has begun to set in and the landscape is pretty well life-less. But it was not always so. In the beginning the whole world was full of life. The description we are given the Garden of Eden is one of life. In Genesis 2:8-9 we hear, "***The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.***" It was the perfect garden, because it was planted by the God the perfect Gardener. There in that Garden man had everything he needed to provide for his body and occupy his time. It was a luscious, green garden full of life without any weeds or aphids to destroy the plants.

Such a perfect garden cannot be found today, though. Something changed. Now our farmers deal with weeds, insects, droughts and floods which make gardening and farming difficult. This is because sin entered the world. That once green, luscious life that Adam and Eve enjoyed was ruined by sin. God's creation which knew no death, changed when Adam ate of the tree which God had commanded not to. This is what Paul is writing of in verse 12 of our text when He says, "***through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin.***" When Adam sinned against God, he brought death into the world.

This effect of sin did not just affect God's creation but it affected the offspring of Adam. No longer was man in the perfect and sinless image of God, but now man was born in the sinful image of Adam. Adam would die and Adam's offspring would die. Diseases would infect the bodies of men, women, and children. Men would shed the blood of other men. Now through this one man we find death all around us. 174 were killed in India by selfish and murderous terrorists. Somewhere an 80 year old man died in his sleep. A 31 year old husband died in a traffic accident because of another careless driver. An child dies while yet in the womb of its mother. Some died by their own sinful choices or the sinful choices of another. Others simply died because sin is in the world. "***Death spread to all men, because all sinned.***"

So we see a lot of symbolism between this dead, lifeless time of year and the world in which we live. A world in which all men are born "***dead in trespasses and sins.***" (Eph 2:1) Spiritual death and physical death are all around us. No man has a leaf on his spiritual tree. Just as the dead of winter around here, so too are all decedents of Adam by nature cold, lifeless, and grey.

## LIFE GIVEN BY CHRIST

Yet tonight we want to consider the Christmas color green - the color of life. It was into this cold, grey, lifeless world that LIFE itself came. Nearly 2,000 years ago the second Adam

came. The Lord of Life, the Son of God, took on flesh and was born into this world. The conception and birth of Jesus was different from all other children ever born. Jesus had no earthly father. He was conceived in womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. Because He was not conceived by the seed of man, He had no sinful nature. Jesus was not born dead in His trespasses and sins. Death was not a part of Him. ***“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (Jn 1:4)***

Jesus embodied what God intended life to be for all men. Jesus lived His life in service to God and His neighbor. He obeyed every command God made. When Jesus faced the cross, He went forth willingly because He knew it was His Father’s will. When the sick, blind, and deaf were brought to Him, He healed them even if He Himself was tired or hungry. His life was a life full of love. Love for God and love for every one of His neighbors. Even when nails were being driven into His hands and feet Jesus prayed for His enemies, that His Father would forgive them. It was love that caused the Son of God to leave the glories and joys of heaven to come to this cold, grey, lifeless world of sin and death. Jesus truly stood out as an evergreen in the dead of winter. His love led Him to be born as a helpless little baby. His love led Him to submit Himself to His mother Mary and step-father Joseph, even though He was their Lord.

But His love can most clearly be seen in His ***“righteous act,”*** as Paul calls it in our text, on Calvary. There the Lord of Life laid down His life as a ransom for dying sinners. There on the cross the eternal Son of God gave Himself up for us to rescue us from death and give us life. There on the cross life, love, and death met together. And Easter shows us who won this battle. Though the eternal, almighty Son of God died on the cross - on the third day He rose from the dead. Life was restored by Christ.

And now through this one Man’s righteous act, ***“the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”*** Sin was removed by His death. A proclamation was made by God to all men - “justification of life.” All men were pronounced not guilty for the sins they committed. Life was restored by the Lord of Life, Jesus Christ. Everlasting life is given as a free gift to all who believe in Him.

So green - the color of life - really is a fitting color for Christmas. Even as we celebrate Christmas in the dead of winter with the greenery of the Christmas tree, wreaths and garlands, it is a reminder that the Lord of life entered this world dead in trespasses and sins. The Son of God came to bring life. He says in John 10 - ***“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (Jn 10:10b)*** The Lord of life who restored life by tasting death and overcoming it by rising from it. The Lord of life who promises life to all who live and believe in Him, saying, ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” (Jn 11:25-26a)*** May the green of Christmas ever be a reminder of the life that is yours in Christ Jesus!

Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ the Death of death, our foe,  
Who, Thyself for me once giving To the darkest depths of woe,  
Thro’ Thy sufferings, death, and merit, I eternal life inherit:  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee. Amen.