

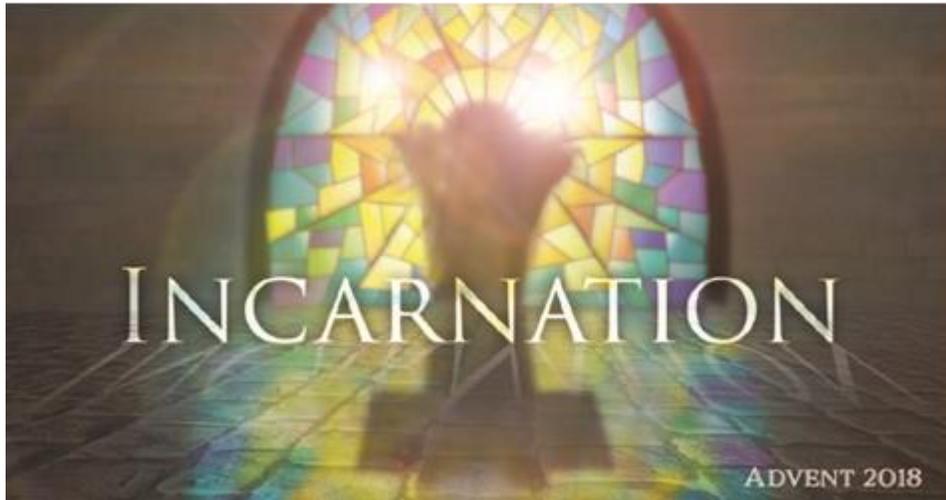
The Incarnate Son of God Daily Displays His Divinity

Kenwood Baptist Church Sermon Series

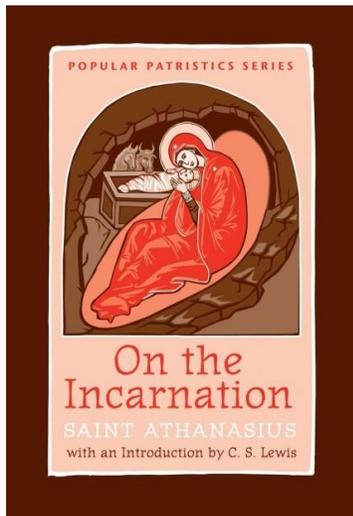
Pastor David Palmer

December 23, 2018

TEXT: 1 John 4:1-11



Merry Christmas! It's a joy to be in God's house this morning on Christmas Sunday, and we have the privilege of celebrating Christmas Sunday the day before Christmas Eve. That doesn't happen that often in the calendar. We are nearing the end of our Advent series. This year, we are looking at the incarnation of Christ. This is the central conviction of Christian faith that distinguishes Christianity from all other faiths. We actually believe that Jesus Christ, the baby born in Bethlehem, is the incarnate Son of the living God. This truth separates Christianity, and it is this truth that grips our hearts this morning. It is a truth that has generated questions



throughout church history. It is a truth that generates questions from skeptics and believers alike, and this Advent season, we have been following this truth with an older brother in Christ, Athanasius, the leader of the church in Africa many centuries ago. As I have mentioned earlier in our series, 2018 was a big year for Africa because it was the first year in church history that there are more Christians in Africa than any other continent in the world. This is the direct outcome of Christian mission, and it's an amazing thing. There are more Anglicans that gather for worship on a Sunday in Nigeria than in the UK. This is astonishing. The Word of Christ has gone forth throughout the world. We been following the thoughts of our older brother, Athanasius, in his short book,

On the Incarnation. Let me just say again how proud I am of us as a church, because you have

actually taken on this challenge. So many of you have written to me or talked to me and said: "I've really done it, and you know what? I'm actually understanding it!" Part of the mark of a great work is that it is understandable.

The truth of Christ, of which Athanasius speaks and writes is a truth that emerges in a time of great controversy. It's in a time of great skepticism and cynicism. Athanasius' century is a violent one with dramatic political change, a time in many ways much like our own. I have loved this book, and reading it again this year has stirred my heart to see the glory of Christ. But I have also been deeply moved by how Athanasius writes not just for believers, but he writes for those who are not yet believers. He writes to a skeptical age, an age that in many ways mocks the truth that Christians proclaim. I found myself wondering if we have that. Do we have of mockery of Christian teaching in our day? So, I looked up some of the billboards and digital ads

in our society, and I saw this one, this gigantic billboard. It's right by the highway in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As you drive up I-25, you see this giant sign that says: "Just skip church. It's all fake news." The sponsorship of this gigantic billboard is: "Happy Holidays from American Atheists!" It is a summons to skip church, and the challenge in this sign really goes to the heart of it. Is Christianity fake news? Does our faith rests on a myth? There is another of these billboards with a little girl in a Santa hat, and she says: "Dear Santa, all I want for Christmas this year is to skip church. I don't believe in fairy tales anymore." I looked at another digital ad, this one providing a text exchange between a young woman and her friend while her mother is looking over her shoulder.

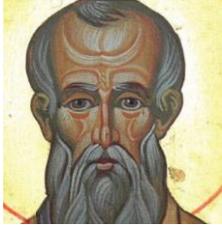


The young woman's friend asks: "You going to church this Xmas?" She texts back profoundly: "Lol. No way. I don't believe that stuff anymore." "What will your parents say?" Texting back to her friend, the young woman says: "They'll get over it." I put these out in front of

you because the mockery of Christmas is real, not just in the fourth century. It is real in the 21st century, and the question before us is how do we respond to that and what is the evidence for

us this morning of this central truth of Christianity? It's not enough for us who believe in Christ just to meditate on the glory of Christmas and hold those truths within our heart. I love that Athanasius thinks deeply about the incarnation, and the last part of his work then is his address to his society.

As we look on this Christmas Sunday, he begins his last section with this:



“What is absurd or worthy of derision on our part?
Is it only that we say that the Word has been made manifest in the body?”

On the Incarnation, 41

That is the central claim of Christianity. That is the truth of Christmas that is at stake this morning. We say that the Word of God, the eternal Son, has been manifest in the body, that He has taken on a body. This truth of Christmas is what John writes about in the text that we heard this morning. He says in 1 John 4:1:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

You may be wondering if 1 John 4 is really a Christmas passage. Well, it is. He says: *“Test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* He continues in 1 John 4:2:

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, . . .”

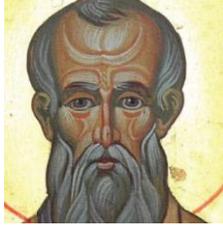
There’s Christmas. Do you see it? Every spirit that says Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. When someone says that, you know they are speaking from God, and the opposite is true. John says in 1 John 4:3:

“. . .and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”

There is an anti-Christ spirit that denies Jesus is coming into the flesh. The stakes are high that *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,”* John 1:14. The central truth of Christmas carries with it the subsequent doctrines that if Jesus is the incarnate Son, then He is the divine Son who has come into the world to save us. So, without Christmas there is no salvation according to the New Testament.

How can we know that Christmas is real? How do we respond to the cultural objectors? Is there any evidence that we can really see for the truth claims of Christmas, or is it all just fake news? I

love how Athanasius responds to his world, and this response reverberates down to our own time. I have found this final section both stirring and helpful in its clarity of thought. He first responds with a patient, thoughtful, and informed response. He begins in paragraph 41 addressing the atheist, those who say they really don't believe in God at all. They don't believe that there even is a Word of God. Athanasius kindly says:



“If they completely deny that there is a Word of God, they are behaving beyond limit, mocking that which they do not know.”

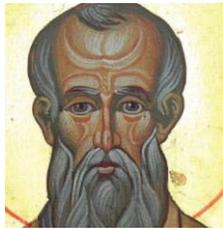
On the Incarnation, 41

It's like talking to a young pre-teenager who is mocking the joys of love—he doesn't know it, he doesn't know how great it is to be married, and at some point you look at him and say: “Dear young friend, you mock that which you don't know. Someday you'll write poetry and be blubbering over some woman that you love.” Athanasius says the atheist, the person who believes in nothing, mocks that which they don't know. It's hard to be an atheist, actually. You have to live that the universe is utterly meaningless, that that which is around us has absolutely no rationality, no design, no order, no purpose, and this is really difficult to maintain. It's hard work to be atheist because you have to daily suppress evidence to the contrary. I was talking with one of our medical students at a Christmas party last night, and I said, “How was your semester?” He said, “Oh, it was really good.” I asked him what the highlight of his semester was, and he said, “You know, I held a heart in my hands for the first time.” (I did clarify quickly that it was from a cadaver in the lab.) “I held this heart and I was stirred to wonder. Just holding it in my hand and looking at this heart and thinking about the amazing design of this heart and what happens on a daily basis, subconsciously, without our intent, that God has packaged all this in this heart that moves and beats and that we have life because of this beating heart. It's happening without my conscious will and God has made this! I held it in my hands and I was stirred with wonder!” It's hard to be atheist and hold a human heart in your hand.

Athanasius moves from the atheist to the spiritual person, and we have many of these today. Some of you this morning may be in this situation. The spiritual person says that God is everywhere; God is in everyone; and the spiritual person is scandalized by the specificity of Christmas. They believe God is in everyone, and the specificity of Christmas to say that God became a baby and dwelt among us seems almost beneath the dignity of this conception of God. The spiritual person doesn't need church, doesn't need the gospel—just needs this idea of God that's in them and in you and in nature. Athanasius encountered this same belief as well, and yet he profoundly says that if the Word of God is in the universe and God is in all of it and every part, “what is so surprising if we say that He came into a human being?” If God can be everywhere, then the incarnation should not be excluded too quickly—that God in His power

could choose to become present here, in a very specific, particular way. If God can be present in the whole, then He can be present in the part.

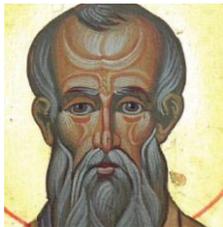
Athanasius then moves next to the entertainer— these categories are my words, not his. The entertainer has a condo in Vegas. They are used to the showbiz culture, and the showbiz culture says: “If God were to come into this world, then He should have come in some kind of spectacular way—something to really grab our attention. In Athanasius’ day, people said:



“Now then, if they ask why he did not appear through other more noble parts of creation, or use some nobler instrument, as the sun or moon or stars or fire or air, but merely a human being, let them know that the Lord came not to be put on display but to heal and to teach those who were suffering.”

On the Incarnation, 43

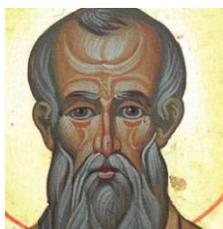
He should have come in a way that you can show on TV, something that would really grab you, that would be impossible not to pay attention to. Right? Or something you could build a miniseries on, at least. Something you could binge watch, or something to stir our hearts! Athanasius says in response:



“One being put on display only needs to appear and to dazzle the beholders; but one who heals and teaches does not simply sojourn, but is of service to those in need and appears as those who need him can bear.”

On the Incarnation, 43

He says that one who comes to dazzle the beholder, to be put on display, is inappropriate for Christmas. The Lord came not to be put on display, but He came to heal. He came to teach those who were suffering. Jesus Christ didn't come to put on a show for us. He came save us, and then Athanasius makes this incredible observation. He says:



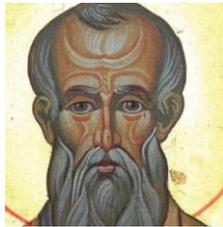
“Now nothing in creation had gone astray in its notions of God, save the human being only. Why neither sun nor moon nor heaven nor stars nor water nor air altered their course; but knowing their Creator and King, the Word, they remained as they were made. But human beings alone, having rejected the good, fabricated things that do not exist instead of the truth.”

On the Incarnation, 42

Only human beings veered away from the truth and needed to be saved, and so God came as a human being. Some among us might say, like a rationalist this morning: “Well, okay, I can see why God would come as a human being. But, if He came, why didn't He heal us or save us with a nod? Why didn't He just take His power and say: ‘You all obviously need to be saved, and so you're saved’? Why didn't He just say it, the way He created the world? Genesis 1 begins with a

world in darkness, and God said: 'Let there be light.' Why couldn't God just say "You're saved." To predicate such a thing misunderstands our need. According to the biblical story, humanity, made in God's image and likeness, had turned away from God, rejected His command, and the outcome of that was death. Death is in you and in me. We need a healer who would come to heal that which had been corrupted, not just to make something new. We saw in our series that the Son of God came to bring life to the dead. Jesus came and He had to take on a body like ours, because ours had been infused, as it were, with death, and so He comes. He comes, the divine Word, the incorruptible One, the immortal, eternal Son of God takes on human flesh, and not just takes it on, but He offers Himself willingly for us. He takes on a body so that, finding death in the body, He might deface it or erase it. The incarnation, Jesus becoming a man, is absolutely necessary. There is no Christmas without it; there is no salvation without it; and Jesus, as He offers His real body for us, overturns death and then infuses us with life.

Brothers and sisters, Christmas, the incarnation of Jesus, makes sense. It makes divine sense that God became man. It is absolutely fitting; it is right; it is appropriate; and Athanasius concludes by saying:



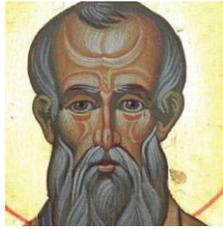
“Properly, therefore, the Word of God took a body and used a human instrument, in order to give life to the body.”

On the Incarnation, 45

Christmas is about God’s becoming man and offering Himself for us and being raised from the dead so that we would have not only forgiveness of sins but new life in Him. This is really, really good news, and there is life available in no other way. That is why John says: “Test the spirits. The ones who say that Jesus came in the flesh, those are the ones speaking from God. But, any that deny that Jesus has come in the flesh, this is the antichrist.” The denial of Christmas denies the diagnosis of our situation. The denial that Jesus came in the flesh denies the solution, the remedy, the healing for our situation, and so we need the incarnation. I love the patience and thoughtfulness by which he responds to his cultural objectors.

The last section of this wonderful, short book turns to provide a question that we all deep down seek. It's a desire for certainty. Is there real evidence for Christmas? We can look to archaeology, and I love to look at old stones, rocks, buildings, coins. Did you know that archaeologists just recently found the ring of Pontius Pilate? That’s so cool! Do you know that archaeologists have never found the body of Jesus? That's even cooler! We can look at evidence of the reliability of the accounts. We can look at the textual transmission of the Scriptures. We can look at how the testimony about Christ has been preserved and transmitted over the centuries, and this strengthens our faith. The testimony is reliable. Archaeological

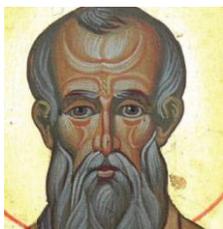
evidence points in the direction of the truth of Christmas. Athanasius asked the question, speaking to those who are not yet believers:



“If they reckon these remarks insufficient,
let them be convinced of what we say
from those things manifest to the sight of all.”

On the Incarnation, 45

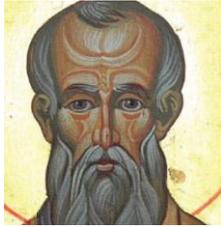
He says to let those who are not yet believers to be convinced of the truth of Christmas from those things manifest in the sight of all. This is a very risky thing. He says: “The truth of Christmas, in other words, can be shown.” He doesn't appeal to archaeology; he doesn't appeal to the textual transmission of the Scripture. He says: “Let those things manifest to the sight of all be our best evidence for Christmas.” What do we see all around us? What are those things that are manifest to everyone? He places the gospel narrative, the incarnation of the beloved Son, out in the public space, and he says: “Let's just look. Let's look around the world,” and he looks around his world, and he sees something remarkable. As he looks around the world, he sees that the world has changed, and he wonders when this happened, and most importantly, who is responsible for this change? We live in a moment where we are used to change. Some of us love it. Some of us hate it. We are stuck with it. We live in a rapid cycle of change. Our technology is rapidly changing. Once you figure out how to use it, there's an upgrade! We live in a rapidly changing environment: business changes, commerce changes, language changes. We see lots of change. Athanasius looks out, and he sees a world that's changed, and this is visible, evident to everyone, and he begins to ask the question: “When did this happen? Who is responsible?” What does he see as he looks around the world? He says:



“When did human beings begin to abandon the worship of idols,
except since the true God Word came among human beings?
When have the oracles amongst the Greeks and everywhere ceased and
become empty, except since the Savior revealed himself upon earth?”

Last summer a group of us from Kenwood were standing in the second largest oracle of the pagan world at Didyma, a colossal structure. It was in ruins. I read to the group some of the last oracles spoken there. People used to go there by tens of thousands and pay money to ask for a word from this oracle, and then people stopped going. I read for the group some the last oracles that were spoken from the Oracle of Apollo at Didyma, as one of the worshipers came to this oracle, paid the fee for a word from the god, and said: “Why are people not coming to you anymore?” This is contemporary with Athanasius, and the Oracle Didyma replied: “I am leaving because I'm being overpowered by a heavenly Man.”

Athanasius continues:



“When did those who are called gods and heroes by the poets begin to be condemned as merely mortal humans, except since the Lord erected the trophy over death and preserved incorruptible the body which he took, raising it from the dead?

When were the deceit and madness of the demons despised, except when the Power of God, the Word, the Master of all condescended to appear on earth?

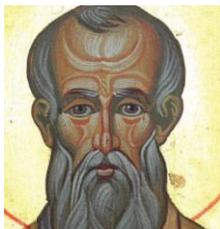
When did the craft and teachings of magic begin to be trampled underfoot, except when the divine manifestation of the Word took place among human beings?

When did the wisdom of the Greeks become foolish, except when the true Wisdom of God revealed itself upon earth?

For formerly the whole inhabited world and every place were led astray by the worship of idols. Now throughout the whole inhabited world, human beings are deserting their superstition, taking refuge in Christ, and worshipping him as God.”

On the Incarnation, 45

When did that happen? Today, 174,000 people a day come to take refuge in Christ. Who is responsible for that change? That's change that I want. You'll never find the Palmer family on the leading edge of technological change. We're just not that good. We're just not that current, but the change in the world that has gripped our hearts, and I want to grip yours, and it has gripped our brother, and it is the change that matters in the world is that people are abandoning idolatry, abandoning superstition, abandoning trusting in themselves, and are trusting in Christ. How did that happen? Was it a marketing strategy of the early church? No! Who was responsible? Athanasius says:

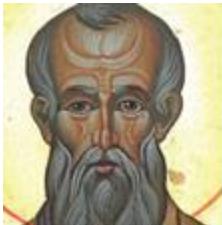


“Christ alone by means of simple words and by means of humans not wise in speech has throughout the inhabited world persuaded whole churches full of human beings.”

On the Incarnation, 47

Brothers and sisters, we need this enthusiasm for Christmas. I'm grieved when I overhear us telling the opposite story. Sometimes I hear: “Oh, it used to be this way, and now we've pushed Christ out of Christmas.” We need to recover confidence in the power of Christ who has come, and Athanasius says: “by means of simple words.” What he was referring to here is the simplicity of the Scripture. The Scripture is accessible. It is not written in philosophical terminology. The literary language of the Scripture, in fact, struck the educated reader of Athanasius' day as poor. Educated people in his day said: “You know, you have kind of a bad

book; it is kind of simple.” People who heard Paul speak said: “You know, he doesn’t really speak that well. He speaks GSL—Greek as a Second Language!” Christ, though, in His divinity, doesn't need flowery speech or philosophical diction, but He speaks in a way that's accessible to all. I'm sure he loved what Billy Graham told us as we graduated from seminary. As all these emerging preachers were going out into the world with four or five years of seminary holding onto their minds and hearts, Billy Graham said to us: “As you go out and proclaim Christ, just make sure to put the cookies on the bottom shelf. Make sure the Word is accessible to everyone. Christ by His power uses the simple language of the Scripture, and moreover, He uses humans not wise in speech.” I think that includes all of us, and “He has filled whole churches full of human beings.” Athanasius goes further and says something that we rarely say today. I am challenged by this, and I want you to be as well, because it turns out to be the climax of this whole argument. He sees people abandoning their ancestral religion, abandoning idolatry, and they're running in and they're filling the churches. Then he takes the next step, and he looks closely at the people in the churches, and what does he see when he sees the people in the churches? He says:



They have changed. (They’ve changed in ways you can see.)

They despise death and think of things immortal. (They’re no longer afraid of death.)

They disregard what is temporal and consider things eternal. (How did they become like that?)

They think nothing of earthly glory (conquest, fame, status, achievement,) but seek only immortality.

(When you look at them) They are distinguished by their virtue

They are remarkably chaste in their relationships. (And they stick out – they stand out.)

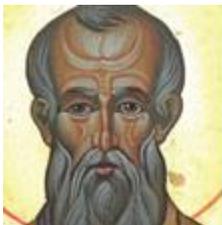
They are set free from their passions:

Adulterers become chaste,

Murderers no longer take up the sword,

And those overcome by cowardice become courageous. (What has happened to these people?)

He looks not only at individuals, but at whole groups of people that were at war with each other. Have you experienced that on our roadways? He says that when they were converted:



“Those whose conduct was characterized by violence and aggression, when they were converted to the teaching of Christ, they laid aside the cruelty of murder and no longer think things of war, but every thought was henceforth peaceful and towards friendship.”

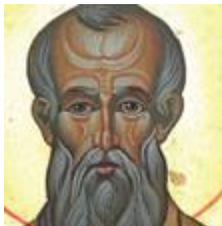
On the Incarnation, 52

Brothers and sisters, this is the climactic proof of Christmas for him. It's not the archaeology, though that is wonderful. It's not the textual transmission of the Scriptures, although that is glorious. The greatest proof, the climactic public evidence for Christmas is the changed the lives of those who believe in Christ. I know that we pull back from this a little bit. Do you know what the number one objection to Christianity is? It's not the archaeological record. It's not the textual corruption of the documents. The number one objection that people raise against Christianity is the hypocrisy of those who say they believe. It's the discontinuity between those who believe and their conduct that doesn't seem to match that. Athanasius summons us to step forward with this amazing observation that the best evidence for the truth of Christmas turns out to be you. It turns out to be me. I know some of you can't imagine this because you think: "David, you're a pastor, you've been in the ministry so long. You've studied the Bible, your sanctification must be just about at the terminal point. I've never met someone as godly as you." I know these are the thoughts you have, but let me just tell you that I am different. If you had known me in high school before I came to Jesus, I would have told you that I was an atheist. But you know, my atheism was really a smokescreen and a covering for my longing to know my heavenly Father. I would have postured myself as a skeptic, but that was really a cover for my own ignorance. I might have postured myself as someone who was cynical, but that was merely a shield to hide the depth of my arrogance and pride. I was angry from some of the things I'd experienced in life up until that point that were painful and deeply disappointing. But, when the incarnate Son of God, who offered Himself for my sins and yours, revealed Himself to me, all that changed. One of the first effects of receiving Christ was all of the anger, all of the disappointment that I felt, just went away. It went away like fog in San Francisco when the sun comes up strong and it dissipated. Instead of cynicism and arrogance, I had a humble desire to know Him and read His Word. Instead of skepticism, I had an earnest desire to be sure of my faith. Instead of atheism, I found a deep and satisfying longing satisfied in knowing and experiencing the love of God. I am such a different person, and I see this in you. The best evidence of Christmas, according to Athanasius, is when you look closely at these people that Christ has filled with churches with. When you look at them, they are different. Their skin color doesn't change; their diction doesn't change; their native language doesn't change; but they become more human. Their minds and hearts are set on things eternal, and they are set free. This is the public truth of Christmas. You and I are the best evidence.

When did these things start to happen? He says it started to happen when the Son of God came. But the question behind the data is to ask ourselves who is responsible for such a change? Who can produce that kind of change? The answer to that is only Christ. Only God could change people like that. Remember the first sentence of this short, wonderful, little book was an invitation. It was an invitation to believers and not yet believers. Athanasius had said in his opening sentence: "Come now blessed lover of Christ, let us expound the things about the

incarnation of the Word.” For believers, he promised that you would have a greater and fuller piety toward Him, that you would have more love for Him. Do you have more love for Jesus at the end of this series? I hope that you do. I do. I have been moved and blessed by His power and the absolute necessity of His taking on real human flesh and what He did with it. I've been blessed to know in fresh ways the assurance of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life, that that I have been bound to Christ. But he says also a promise to the not yet believers. Whether there was a fourth century version of the Fake News billboard, we don't know exactly what that was, but we do know that there were many who were opposing Christianity. There were false teachers around. There were those mocking the incarnate Son of God, and Athanasius says that “the more he may be mocked by unbelievers, so much more does he provide a greater witness of his divinity.” If you are here this morning and you would not reckon yourself a believer, let me say that I am glad that you're here. Let me also say, we would love to see you more often than Christmas and Easter. Let me also say that I have sat where you have sat. I've thought some of the thoughts that you have had, and if you're here this morning and you are not yet a believer, I want to place before your mind, before your eyes, this greatest of all evidences.

Athanasius ends with an appeal to his world that does not yet believe, those who have not yet seen Christ. He says:



“If someone does not see Christ, learn of him from the works of his body, and test whether they be human or of God. And if they be human, let him mock; but if they are known to be not human, but of God, let him not laugh at things that should not be mocked, but let him marvel that through such a thing (the incarnation) divine things have been manifested to us, that through death incorruptibility has come to all, and through the incarnation of the Word, the universal providence, have been made known.”

On the Incarnation, 54

If these works are of God, let him marvel that through the death of Christ, death has been taken away, that through the incarnation of Christ, God has been made known. Look at the works of His body. Would you see the body today? If you go to Israel and you walk around Galilee, you cannot see Jesus walking around it. If you go to the Jerusalem Temple Mount, you cannot hear Him teaching in the temple courts. The Son of God took on a body so that through faith, we might be in Him the body of Christ. This has been the most profound thought for me, that Jesus' incarnation means that you and I become “in Him,” and if you want to see Christ this morning, look around. Look around the room. Look around the city. Look around people who are different than they once were. They haven't undergone an attitude adjustment. They haven't adopted some psychological techniques. They are different because Jesus Christ is alive, and He has led us out of darkness into His marvelous, glorious light.

In 1 John 4:9-11, John says:

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

As the body of Christ, the truth of Christmas is on public display. My dear friend pastors in a Muslim country. He invited some young men to come to a retreat the church was having. These young men were angry young men. They couldn't get jobs. The economy in their country was down, and they were unemployed. They had skills, interests, desires. They were upset. They were angry. They were blaming others. These young men had become radicalized. They were ready to take their rage and pour it out on others, and somehow, they came to this retreat. The first night, the church gathered at this beach house and they sang. They heard the Scriptures taught. They discussed. They prayed for one another. They slept that first night, woke up the next morning. After a delicious breakfast, they began again, singing and a time in Scripture and prayer for one another. Halfway through the retreat, these radical young Muslims left. The retreat ended after the next two days. My pastor friend came back to the city, and one day, a few days afterward, he saw them in the coffee shop. He said: “What happened to you? You came the first night. You came in the morning, and then you left.” They looked at him with trembling lips and tear-filled eyes, and they said: “We could not bear the love that you had for one another. We could not bear it. We had never seen anything like it.” The best evidence for the truth of Christmas is you! Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we honor You. We magnify You. We love You this morning because You first loved us. O Lord, we pray for greater and fuller love for You this Christmas. We praise You, Lord Jesus, that Your incarnation makes sense, that it was absolutely fitting, that it was necessary, that it was the perfect plan of Almighty God, and we love You more for taking death from us and giving us eternal life, for renewing and restoring the image of God in us, for changing us. Lord, I pray this morning for those who are still standing on the outside of Christmas. I pray that they have heard Your voice in my words, that they have sensed Your thoughts in the thoughts of our brother, and Lord, that You would reveal Yourself to them. I pray, Lord God, that You would move in our city in such a way that the percentages of those who do not believe would go dramatically down in the coming year. I ask, Spirit of the living God, that You would be poured out afresh upon our country and upon our world, and that You, Lord Jesus Christ, would move the atheist, that You would move the skeptic, the cynic, away from this poor and difficult-to-maintain life, and that You would reveal Yourself anew, that You would fill churches with human beings who, seeing You and knowing You, find the object of their heart's affection and slowly over time that the Holy Spirit would begin to produce fruit and change that matters.

Lord, I pray for Kenwood that this Christmas and in the year ahead, we ourselves would be Your great evidence in the world that You have come. Father, we praise You, we magnify You, we believe in You, Lord Jesus Christ.

In Your Name we pray, Amen.