

John 1:1-13; Luke 2: 22-38; The Embrace of the Christ Child I. The Identity of those who Embrace Him II. The Benefit received by those who Embrace Him

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when Jesus came there were various responses to His arrival. Some rejoiced- while other were enraged. Even today- most people will smile if you say – merry Christmas- but if you try to engage them on the need for faith some will simply refuse to talk about it. The name of Jesus is met with different reactions- as we saw last week many reject Him. Although the world was made by Him- and He came to His own people- they did not know Him or receive him. They were ignorant- even rejecting Him! This was a part of His humiliation- He suffered for us- being rejected so that we might ever be received and embraced. Well- today we find out that not all rejected Him. Some did embrace Him- and to these were given the blessings of a warm embrace! Today we see that Jesus Christ gives the gift of adoption to all those who embrace Him. Although the inn may have had no place for Him- there were still arms that would embrace Him!

I. The Identity of those who Embrace Him

We start by considering the identity of those who embrace Him. Who exactly- did welcome the birth of this blessed child. Well- it started already in the womb. When Mary was told by the angel that she would have a son- Mary said- may be as you have said- I am the servant of the Lord. And when Mary wen to visit Elizabeth- John who was still in the womb- jumped for joy at the presence of His Lord. Even Elizabeth says- why has it been granted to me that the mother of my Lord should visit me? And we all know the story of the shepherds from Luke 2- the angels told them that the Savior had been born- who is Christ the Lord. And after the angels left they hurried to Bethlehem to see this thing that had happened. After they found baby Jesus laying in the manger- they spread the word to the whole city concerning Him- and they glorified and praised God for all that they had seen and heard. Jesus was welcomed again- eight days later as we read from Luke 2. Mary and Joseph brought the babe to the temple to fulfill the Law- and in comes Simeon filled with the Spirt. Simeon says that this child is the salvation prepared in the presence of the people. He will be a light to the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. And again- Anna the aged prophetess gave thanks to God and told about this child to all who were waiting for the

redemption of Israel. So- as you can see- there are some who do receive Him- Some who embrace him as He is and rejoice in His arrival! As the OT saints had longed for this day- when the day of salvation arrives there are a faithful remnant that see it and rejoice! Although the light of faith and expectation had grown dim- it was not extinguished! Still there were some of the people of Israel who were longing for the Immanuel to come- and their hope was not lost! Although not all Israel is of the same faith as father Abraham- here we find true children of Abraham who live by faith! And even among the nations- from the Gentiles we find the wise men in Mt. 2. After some time- maybe a few months or perhaps 2 years pass- these wise men who have travelled from the East- following yonder star- find the house where Mary and Joseph were residing. Seeing the king of the Jews they present their gifts- worshipping one who would be called the hope of the nations! After searching and following for many days- they find their hearts desire- Jesu- the Christ child. What we remember most about the Christmas story- what we celebrate and delight in- are the very ones who embraced the child! Shepherds, Wise-men- Simeon and Anna- beloved saints who worshipped the King.

Now what joined these people together- what united them was their hope- their trust in God's promises and their submission to His Word. As we read from John 1- to all who did receive Him- to those who believed in His Name. To receive Jesus is to take Him- to embrace Him like Simeon did in Luke 2. Although we cannot now hold this child in our arms- we can give Him the same embrace with a heart of faith! Holding this child as the object of your hope. To associate with Him- to regard him as your own- and to call him your blessed one! You see- Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers- He is not ashamed to associate with us as Heb. 2 says- so may we never be ashamed of Him! He has done so much for us- showed us such love- how could we ever be embarrassed by Him? To act like we don't know Him- or mumble when we should be rejoicing? No- let those who know Him acknowledge Him- praising and glorifying God for all that we have seen and heard. And let us believe in His name- v. 12 continues. To believe in Him is to be committed to Him- to trust Him and place your confidence in Him. He is the joy of our hearts- the hope of the nations and the fulfiller of prophecy. The desire of every longing heart- by His name we are delivered- in His name we are saved! Although some did not want Him- some did embrace Him and still do today! Like the

shepherds and the wise men- worshipping and praising God for this blessed birth! Not all shunned the light- some basked in His light and glorified God for it! Praise God for sending His Son according to His Word! O Savior- we greet thee- whose birth we celebrate this glad morning! How do we embrace Him? By receiving Him into our hearts! Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ- and you will be saved! Although we thought we were embracing Him- it turns out He was embracing us! We may bless His name- but He is the One blessing us!

II. The Benefit given to those who Embrace Him

Now that we have received Him- now that we have believed in His name- John 1 continues by outlining the benefits connected to this reception. To those who acknowledge Him and believe in His name- to these He gives the right to become children of God. Believing in a Child- makes you a child! Claiming the Son gives you a Father! Embracing the Son- we are embraced by the Father! Note that He- Jesus- gives you this right! This becoming- being made children- is a supernatural work. It is one that Christ the blessed Child performs for us- on us! Or as Eph. 1 says- we are predestined for adoption through Jesus Christ- according to the purpose of His will. He- Jesus- credits us with this new family- gives us this bestowed sonship. One orphaned- now held by the firm and loving arms of God! By His free gift of grace- we are made something that we were not- once forsaken now embraced! By the Son and His Spirit- we are reborn- born into a Spiritual family. And to prove that this work is of God- v. 13 continues. These were not born of blood. Being born of blood was the focus of the Hebrew people- their focus on genealogies- being the descendants of Abraham. Their family lineage and heritage- but being in the correct branch in a family tree does not make you a child of God. Your genetic makeup does not secure a place in God's presence. Christmas is not a holiday for the Jews- or for the Americans- it is day of celebration for the whole world! Today- we share Christ with all His people- one church in one faith- One Father and one body of believers! Nor is this benefit secured by the will of man- or the strivings of flesh and blood. Becoming a child of God is not something that mere man can achieve- nor is it man's desire that makes it so. To be clear- children of God are not counted according to natural procreation- nor according to human lineage- but rather by Spiritual adoption. How can we be transferred from one family to another- how are we changed from being children of Satan to becoming children of

God? Only by the work of this blessed Child- only by the blood of the Lamb! Being born again- not by blood but by the water and the Spirit as John 3 says- is a sovereign gift and a profound privilege! Although God may use Godly parents and faithful preaching- we cannot change the hearts of our children- nor make them members of God's family. He gives the right- the power and the authority- even the ability to become children of God.

This now means two things- first we have the rights of children. The very same rights of a child- belong to us now. We are not only called children- we are actually considered- reckoned as children. As children of God we now can approach God directly. One with Him and one with each other! Christmas is about celebrating our identity in Christ! We can have confidence- even boldness in laying our prayers and petitions before Him- because He is our Father and we are His children. This truth calms our hearts- we know our heavenly Father will provide for us- because He is our Father! As LD 46 says- in prayer we have a childlike awe and trust that our God will not refuse us what we need. But there is another aspect- to become children of God speaks to a becoming a child- a process if you will. Since we are considered as children- Christ by His Spirit molds us so that we start to look and act as children. As I John 3:2 says- we are children of God- when we see Him we will be like Him. This is our hope- so therefore we purify ourselves. The Holy Spirit transforms us to be like the perfect Son- which is a blessed privilege as well! He gives us the right- the power to become children of God- because that is what we are!

To conclude- Jesus Christ gives the gift of adoption to all those who embrace Him. He makes us children of God- what a privilege! We are children- just like Jesus is God's Son we are God's sons and daughters. To all those who receive Him- who believe in His name- this is what they become! We close with the words of Mt. 10- everyone who acknowledges me before me, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies Him before men, will also be denied before the Father in heaven. May we join our embrace to the shepherds, wise-men and saints who have gone before. Come let us adore Him- receiving and embracing this wonderful Savior!