

Christmas Service

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Date: 25 December 2005

Preacher: W.D. Graham

[0 : 00] We trust in Jesus. He will not leave us or forsake us. He will keep company with us and enable us to go on and to the end.

And we plead, O Lord, that we may seek to walk more closely with Christ and to rejoice in his presence and in all that is holy and good.

Rather than the things that so often attract us and would drag us away from Jesus. We bless you this evening, O Lord, for the fact of prayer and the wonderful privilege it is to be able to bring to you the desires of our hearts as well as the pleadings that we make for our own forgiveness and your mercy.

And this evening we pray your blessing upon our nation and all people within the nation.

For we seem so sadly in our day to have departed from many of the landmarks which have been raised up in the past to show people the truth, to guide people in good ways, to have standards that keep people from sin.

[1 : 32] that now sin wears a very bold face and we have to confess that we have fallen, fallen so far short of your requirements of us.

And we plead, O Lord, for your mercy. We ask you, O Lord, to bless the progress of the gospel, not only in our own land, but throughout the whole world.

And we pray for the missionaries who have taken the gospel to far places of the earth. many of them may be at this time feeling lonely and very conscious of being far away from home and loved ones.

And we pray, Lord, that you would encourage every effort that is made in our land and in other lands to spread your word and to bring a knowledge of Christ to the peoples of the world.

We pray, dear Lord, for all who are laid aside in sickness, that they may know your healing touch and above all, the comfort of your presence with them.

[2 : 47] We pray for those who may be mourning the loss of loved ones and who at this time of year particularly have memories that seem to come crowding back and cause sorrow all over again.

And we ask you, dear Lord, that you would comfort them with your own presence and grace. And we pray that they may know that when they cast their burden upon the Lord, he will bear them up and grant them the comfort of his peace and his presence.

We pray this evening, too, for all who may be on duty, caring for the sick, maintaining law and order, or whatever it is that you have called them to work at.

And may they know, too, that what they do can be offered to you as a service and as a ministry that will be owned and blessed by you when it is done in your name and for your glory.

We pray, Heavenly Father, that you would be with us now. Guide us as we study your word together and help us as we sing your praise to do it from hearts that are full to overflowing with thanksgiving.

[4 : 17] Take away sin and accept us, then, we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Amen. And before we turn to study God's word together, let us sing again this time in the Singed Psalms version of Psalm number 16.

Psalm 16, and we'll sing there from verse 7 as far as verse 11. That's the end of the psalm. from verse 7 to the end of Psalm number 16.

The tune is Old 134. I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice.

from verse 7 to the end of Psalm number 16. Psalm 16 I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night I'd like us now to turn our thoughts again to the passages that we have read this evening and first of all to look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians in chapter 3

and looking there at verse number 19.

I would like us to look together at one or two verses this evening all on the same theme.

[6:18] In Ephesians chapter 3 and at verse 19 we break into one of Paul's long sentences.

If you look up to the middle of verse 17 we could join his thought there. In the middle of verse 17 we read And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

And I want our thoughts this evening to centre around this last few words in verse 19 where we read of all the fullness of God.

The word fullness *pleroma* in the Greek the word was quite obviously a favourite word with the apostle Paul and apart from one reference which we will look at a little later a reference in the gospel by John Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the word and it is most significant a most significant word for Paul to have used and particularly in the way in which he does use it in fact in some ways it was a quite astonishing word as we'll see in a moment it was a word meaning completeness so if you can keep that concept in mind this concept of not just fullness but of completeness we look together at one or two of Paul's references and then finally at the reference in John's gospel to see what the word conveys to us in God's truth in the letter to the Colossians in that passage that we read together there in chapter two and at verse nine Paul says for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form and you he says have been given fullness in Christ who was head over every power and authority now we made some reference to that verse nine in Colossians two this morning and I want to dwell on it a little more at this time the apostle says in a in a most striking way for in Christ all the fullness of the deity the completeness of the deity lives in bodily form in the human person who was

[10:35] Jesus Christ now as I mentioned Paul was very fond of using this word fullness but he was not alone in using this word it was quite a buzz word in the heathen world in which Paul lived there were many theories many beliefs as to what governed the world in which people live what made up the *pleroma* or the fullness or completeness of the world and the thinkers and religionists of the time had many different answers propounded to satisfy their thinking on that score but as far as

Paul was concerned the answer was God God alone is the one who governs the universe of which he and he alone is the creator he only is deity he only is God and the Bible makes known to us who God is and what he is like and what his will for each one of us is and you don't go looking for any other deity to worship for God says the apostle is complete in himself our shorter catechism gives us the brilliant answer to what is or who is

God God is a spirit infinite eternal and unchangeable in his being wisdom power holiness goodness justice goodness and truth so when we think of the fullness of the deity of God we are speaking of his glorious completeness of all that God is and the contemplation of all that God is should be a source of constant delight to all of us who take his word and himself seriously all the fullness of God he is spirit infinite eternal unchangeable in his being wisdom power holiness justice goodness and truth but if that is wonderful and it is then the apostle calls our attention to something that is if one could say it even more marvelous and it is that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ Christ that is an astonishing statement here in verse nine of chapter two

Paul's in Colossians Paul says for in Christ all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form and over in chapter one and in verse nineteen of this same epistle he says concerning Christ he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in him so that in everything he might have the supremacy for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him the completeness of God dwelling in Christ Christ was born in

[16:09] Bethlehem the birth of any child is a miracle the birth of Jesus is just beyond words to describe it adequately to think of that little child having in himself all the fullness of deity those people living in Paul's time who were searching around for meaning in life and who dabbled in a quite astonishing number of religions of practices of philosophies and so on they were always searching but never finding and in effect the apostle is saying stop listen to what

I've got to tell you for my purpose is that you may have the full riches of complete deity complete understanding of the deity for in Colossians again in chapter 2 and verse 2 he says my purpose is that you may be encouraged in heart and united in love so that they may have the full riches of complete that's the same word of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery

of God namely Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge you don't need to go looking anywhere else it is in Christ and in Christ alone that we find God and the answer to who he is what he is and what purposes he has for us we find it all in Jesus and if you think back to that wonderful definition that is given to us in the catechism of who God is spirit infinite eternal unchangeable in his being wisdom power holiness justice goodness and truth you find all of that in the Lord Jesus Christ it's incredible to think of it in one sense but it's true that this what George MacDonald the philosopher author called this little baby thing Christ who came into the world from the heavenly regions who walked this earth and died and was buried but rose again and then ascended forty days later into heaven and all the time he was here he was God all the fullness of deity dwelt in him the second person of the glorious trinity and that is why it's so important for us to study the life of Jesus Christ how it's so important for us to hear the words of Jesus Christ and how important for us it is to obey the words of Jesus Christ and to submit to his claims all the fullness of deity dwells in him and it is in and through him that we have peace with God reconciled through all that he has done for those who trust him he is in very truth Emmanuel God with us and that being so it means that God is for us in all his saving goodness when we trust in him and that truly is marvelous us but again if it is possible there's something even more marvelous than that but when we look at

[21 : 38] Colossians chapter 2 and verse 10 we read that not only in Christ do we find all the fullness of the deity living in this person Jesus Christ that says the apostle and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority in him is the fullness of deity and then he makes over to those who trust him all fullness the fullness of Christ into your life and into mine and that takes us back to

Paul's letter to the Ephesians to chapter 3 and to verse 19 where he says among other things that he wants us to know this love that surpasses knowledge the love of Christ that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God God now these are quite staggering words to think that ordinary human specimens like ourselves should be filled to the measure of the fullness of God the apostle again in Ephesians in chapter 4 and verse 13 speaks about reaching unity in the faith and so on and attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ now these texts and the context from which they come are quite amazing in their implications for you and for me if we are already Christian believers then according to the apostle we have been given that is a present possession we have been given fullness that is completeness in Christ Jesus you know how very often someone might say in a rather disparaging kind of way to a person who is living what they might consider to be a very dull kind of life oh get a life well here is life life in its fullness in its completeness in Christ he gives us a new life one that will never end and one that the apostle is telling us gets better as time goes on we mature in this life it is complete in itself but that maturity means that we come to recognize more and more the worth of what the Lord has given us and we go on adding in our own experience to what we know of the love of God in Jesus Christ that is better than any other knowledge we could get because it goes to make us more and more like Jesus Christ and so that is why Paul in Ephesians chapter 4 and in verse 13 referring to both the church and to individuals within it speaks to us about the fact that we can do everything through Christ Jesus who gives us strength he gives us the completeness the fullness of Christ how wonderful indeed so the mature Christian says the apostle this Christian who has the fullness of Christ in him his salvation is a steady Christian he's not blown about by every new view that comes on the wind as it were but he is to use an old word he is thorough to Christ in contrast to those who because of their lack of faith or their lack of knowledge or their lack of fellowship become prey to vagaries of feelings wrong teaching and the wiles of the evil one so must we must rejoice in what we are as

[27 : 23] Christians what we have been made through Christ we are complete in him and the fullness of his salvation the fullness of his life has been given us and it will take us from here to eternity and make us rejoice there forever and ever and ever and we should go on seeking to know more and more of him so that at the end we'll be like him and that will be completeness indeed the whole measure of the fullness of Christ but I mentioned that as well as Paul there was one other reference to this word fullness in scripture and that is in the gospel by John in the first chapter of

John's gospel and I want to refer to that in closing we have thought a little about the fullness of deity all that God is about the fullness of Christ that is he is in truth God incarnate we have thought a little about the fullness that Christ makes over to us if we are Christians the wonder of us becoming complete in him and like him but now I want us to look at verse 16 in John chapter 1 where we read something else regarding fullness us the apostle there says from the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another the fullness of his grace grace

I want to finish on this note because I want to encourage any who are here this evening who have not yet committed themselves to Jesus for their salvation if you are in that category you may have a host of reasons in your own mind as to why you have not committed yourself to Christ but I want you for a moment to consider Jesus Jesus who is described for us in this gospel of John in chapter 1 here and in verse number 14 as being full of grace and truth and it is from that fullness of grace that he offers himself to you this evening

Jesus is the truth he will never tell you a lie he will never mislead you in any way he will never do anything or say anything or direct you to do anything that is sinful you can trust Jesus with your soul and with your mind Jesus is also full of grace and that means that no matter what condition he sees you in this evening no matter what the condition of your soul or your mind is in no matter what sin is in your life

Jesus in grace will meet with you and the wonderful thing is that grace comes to us to save us we all need grace because not one of us even the most upstanding of us is able to stand before God in his own character we've all sinned so we all need grace but he is full of grace and that grace is sufficient to meet your deepest need for he accepts us as we are and he will make us what he wants us to be and as

[33 : 12] I've said we cannot do that by our own effort or claim it from our own merit salvation is all of grace but he is abundant grace he is full of grace complete grace salvation is complete in Christ Jesus so then what will your response to Christ be this evening here is one person's response and it would be a great thing if you made it yours just as I am so tossed about with many a conflict many a doubt fightings within fears without

O Lamb of God I come just as I am thou wilt receive welcome pardon cleanse relieve because thy promise I believe O Lamb of God I come he is full of grace Amen let us pray our dear Lord we bless you for the gospel of grace a gospel given because we are all sinners who need to be saved we are all sinners in need of grace how wonderful it is to know that

Jesus who came to seek and to save sinners who are lost is full of grace complete as a saviour as well as God in human form Lord we pray that all of us here this evening may be found in Christ Jesus and therefore complete in him for his name's sake Amen let us now sing in closing to God's praise in psalm number 25 in the sing psalms version that's on page number 29 and we'll sing there from verse 4 as far as verse 9 the tune is rocking him psalm 25 verses 4 to 9 on page 29 oh Lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me to know direct and guide me in the truth in your truth instruct me in the way to go verses 4 to 9 in psalm 25 we stand to sing word The Lord revealed to me the way, and all the world held me to the Lord.

The Lord revealed to me the Father's life, and he did send his holy name.

[37 : 38] Amen. And now may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest on and abide with us and with all whom we love this night and forevermore. Amen.