

**Occasion:** Fourth Sunday in Advent [C]

**Date:** 12-20-2009

**Text:** Hebrews 10:1-10

**Title:** "Seated in the Owner's Box"

**Introduction:**

When you watch a football or baseball game, the focus naturally is on the players on the field. If you are at the stadium, you also can't help but notice all the fans in their seats. What you generally don't see or maybe even don't notice, is the owner of the team or the general manager, who are usually seated in the owner's box. While unseen, you can be sure they are watching and evaluating everything that happens on the field.



**Setting:**

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Advent, the last Sunday before Christmas. At Christmas, all the attention is on the players, particularly the "Star" player, the baby Jesus. Yet, in the Christmas account, there are many supporting players as well. But you can be sure, off in the "Owner's Box", the Lord is watching, even directing the events, so that the outcome goes entirely according to plan.

In the Epistle Lesson for today, I want to focus our attention on one phrase that is crucial in understanding everything that is going on at Christmas. Speaking of Jesus and His role, Scripture tells us:

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said:

<sup>7</sup>"Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—  
I have come to do Your will, O God."

Here we see what the events of Christmas are all about, **"When Christ came into the world, He said: "... I have come to do Your will, O God." "The Word became flesh"** (John 1:14), according to the will of God, that is for a purpose, to accomplish something planned by God His Father. Then the Epistle Lesson tells us what Christ accomplished according to the Will and the Plan of God the Father:

<sup>10</sup>And by that Will, we have been made holy  
through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

All the events that have led up to that night in Bethlehem when the Savior was born, all the people part of that event, all the history of the descendants of Abraham, all of God's requirements for animal sacrifices offered over the centuries before, everything was in accordance with God's Will, God's Plan, and God's Direction. And, everything was working toward One Outcome, —> **"We have been made holy."**

Yes, the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, was all according to God's Will and God's Plan,  
—> **"We have been made holy."**

Yes, Christmas is all about Giving—the Giving of One Gift, One Gift from God to Man,  
—> **"We have been made holy."**

**I. THE FIRST GIFT OF HOLINESS:**

Now, it is important to understand, this Gift from God to Man —> **"We have been made holy."** is not the first time that God gave this Gift to Man. Scripture tells us that at creation:

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,..."

<sup>27</sup>So God created man in His Own image,  
in the image of God He created him;  
male and female He created them. - *Genesis 1:26-27*

When God made the first man and the first woman, they were created "Holy" and "Pure", like God Himself. Holiness, Purity, was God's Gift to them as much as their life, their body, their minds, their strength, their abilities.

For creation to work properly, for people to relate to God and to each other properly, holiness, purity, is absolutely necessary. Without holiness, without purity, man's relationship with God, man's relationship with each other will not work, and instead of leading to good, will only lead to evil. Either man lives motivated out of a selfless love for God and for others, OR, man lives motivated out of a selfish love for himself. The first is "Pure Love", the second is "Corrupt Love" and it leads to destruction of self and of others.

God created man to live in "Holiness", that is, to live by a "Pure Love" for Him and for everyone else. This "Pure Love" desires what is best, not for self, but for God and for others. Yet, the real blessing of this "Pure Love" is that as everyone gives only "Pure Love", then everyone also receives only "Pure Love". What would the world be like today if everyone, **everyone** gave only "Pure Love" to others? There would be no crime, no violence! There is certainly no love for others in crime or violence. There would be no fighting, no arguing, no bitterness, no suspicion, no distrust or discomfort about others. In "Pure Love" you can always trust the other person because you know that person is looking out for you, and not just for himself. What

would the world be like today if everyone, **everyone** gave only "Pure Love" to others? There would be no poverty, no hunger, no homelessness. The "Pure Love" in others would always give and uplift those in need, so that they would not suffer.

You see, God's Way, the Way of Holiness, the Way of "Pure Love", the Way of "Selfless Love" is the **Only Way** everyone can find real and lasting Peace, Comfort, Security, Joy in their lives. Anything short of "Pure Love" leads to distrust, discomfort, insecurity and despair. The Way of "Pure Love" describes the way that God originally made man. The Way of "Corrupt Love" of self describes man as we know him, – and not only others, but ourselves as well. And most important, we see that "Corrupt Love" does not work! Look at the world! How well is man doing living in "Corrupt Love" – a love of self before God and before others? The economies of the major countries of the world are bankrupt! The morality of the leaders of the world is bankrupt! The world is on a One Way road to destruction. Without God, without "Holiness", without "Pure Love" everything is chaos and ends up in calamity. Man is left only in despair.

The original Gift of "Holiness", living in the "image and likeness of God" has been squandered and lost. Without it, we are hopeless! Yet, we are powerless to get it back for ourselves. "Holiness" is a Gift of God by virtue of His creative power. Man needs God to act by His creative power again to recreate "Holiness" in us. And that is exactly what Christmas, what Christ, is all about.

## II. THE SECOND GIFT OF HOLINESS:

You and I, all mankind, – we need a "Make Over"! And, only God can "Make us Over".

That "Make Over" requires two things:

First, we need to turn away from "Corrupt Love" and everything associated with "Corrupt Love" or "Love of Self First". It doesn't work. It is not what God created us to be. We cannot hold on to any portion of "Corrupt Love" and be "Pure"! That is impossible! In connection with this renouncing "Corrupt Love" and all its ways, we need forgiveness from God for all our thoughts, words and actions done out of "Corrupt Love". Since we have turned away from God, since we have violated His "Pure Love", only He can forgive us. Yet, God cannot leave the guilt for sin unpunished. That would not be just! That would not be right! Jesus came into the world to take upon Himself the guilt for man's sin and to receive the punishment from God for it. Forgiveness by God is the transfer of guilt from man to Jesus. The debt for sin must be paid! Forgiveness for us is the transfer of our debt for sin to Jesus Who has paid that debt in full in the sacrifice of His body on the cross. All the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament taught that principle. The guilt for the sin of the person was transferred to the animal, and the animal was killed, sacrificed in punishment for sin. All of the animal sacrifices were merely an illustration of The One

Great Transfer of Guilt for Sin from Man to Jesus, Who took the punishment for Man. That's Part One of the "Make Over". We turn away from "Corrupt Love" and renounce everything associated with "Corrupt Love" and we receive forgiveness through the transfer of the guilt of our corruption to Jesus.

Second, we receive from God as a Gift the credit for the "Holy" life of Jesus. In this way, God makes us "Holy" That's the Plan!

<sup>10</sup>And by that Will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

As we have renounced and forsaken "Corrupt Love", now, by the direction of God's Word and God's Spirit, we embrace in faith the Way of "Pure Love" and we seek to live "Pure Love" in our lives. Scripture tells us:

<sup>21</sup>Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. – *Ephesians 4:21-24*

That's the "Make Over"! That's the "New Creation"! That's "The Plan"! That's what Christmas is all about! Jesus is the Foundation for the "Make Over" of your life! God made you to live in "Pure Love". When Adam turned away from God, that "Pure Love", that "Selfless Love" was corrupted – it became a "Selfish Love" (a love of self above God and above others). In Christ, God is working to convict you of your corruption, to forgive you and to renew you in His Image and His Likeness, so that in "Making you Over", you can live with Him and with others, now and forever in "Pure Love".

## Conclusion:

In the Gospel Lesson for today, we see the Plan of God unfolding, as Mary, now pregnant with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, visits Elizabeth, her relative, who is also pregnant, with John the Baptist. Soon, we will hear the Good News of the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem, also as planned by God. As we see the events unfold again in the birth of Jesus, as we hear of all the people involved in the account– Mary, Joseph, the Innkeeper, the Shepherds, the angels, we can rejoice in the plan of God at work on our behalf. We can turn our heads to the "Owner's Box" as God not only watches the events unfold, but He is very involved in directing those events—all according to His Plan and His Will. We can see the infant Jesus in the manger and we can hear Him say: **"Here I am, I have come to do Your will, O God."** And we can rejoice, because we know that **"by that Will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."**  
AMEN