

## FROM A FAMILY BORN INTO A FAMILY TAKING US TO TRUE FAMILY

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall crush your head. And you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15*

Soon, the syrupy stories will once again be told on NewsTalk 1010 AM as I drive around the city. Ah, they are heart touching tales of pure emotion. And as the cars whizz by or more frequently crawl ahead, behind and beside, some 19<sup>th</sup> century image of horse drawn carriages slicing silently towards village centre to the tune of sleigh bells fills the mind. Scenes of domestic bliss from a time when gender roles were clearly defined, and church and family supported marriages fill us with a nostalgic longing for a time that ...unfortunately....never really was. And when the nostalgia gives way to envy we enter into true sins of the season.

I don't mean to Grinch away the nostalgia but I've read sermons from those times. I've read them from across denominational lines. And if you were to read such things minus the references to "the events" which would give the date in which they were written away you would think that they were written now. People had their anxieties. They had their family troubles. They had, as Episcopal bishop, The Most Rev. Philip Brooks wrote in 1867 for the well known carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem" "hopes and fears for all the years".

But as the verse continues "hopes and fears for all the years are met in Thee tonight". The hopes and fears are met in the Christ, meaning that they are resolved in the coming Christ, or taken away by the coming Christ, for the very reason promised from that fallen place in Eden.

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall crush your head. And you shall bruise His heel.*

The cause of all fear is that Unholy Trinity - Death, the Devil and our Fallen Flesh. The Messiah comes with the promise of crushing its head -- the serpent.

His coming is unique. He would be born into a family from a family. And the family he was from brought all manner of divine blessings, for the family he comes from is divine. And with the Divine Family there comes gifts of healing of the Human Family, the Fallen Family, the Struggling Strife-filled Family and all manner of Dysfunctional Family.

Yes, the one who was born in Bethlehem was coming from a family. Already, he was from the most perfect self-sustaining relationship of love there was. One of the first chapters in Lutheranism 101 is called "It's All about Relationships" and indeed such is the case. Our little Lord Jesus was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He was one with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God in His deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since He has in Himself Fatherhood, Sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love".

But along the way, he would also be born of a mother. From the Divine Family of God he would be born into the human family through Mary. He would be born of a Virgin. It is a role that

Scripture rightly calls blessed. "All generations shall call me blessed". It was role in the plan of God from the beginning. It is a fact essential if he is to be truly God and truly Man, coming from a Divine Family and Entering into the Human Family. That fact is conveyed even in the few words from Genesis "I will put enmity between you and the woman; between your seed and **Her seed**". There is something to ponder in those two words "Her seed". The Bible usually speaks of Abraham's Seed or Isaac's Seed. It is the male who has "seed" but here we have the woman who possesses Seed. Where does she possess it from? The Holy Spirit! The Saviour will be uniquely the Seed of the woman, miraculously conceived and virgin-born.

The Infinite would enter the realm of the finite.

The fact that He comes from the woman tells us of His humanity and the fact that he is solely from the woman tells us that He is Divine. The fact that he crushes the head of the serpent tells us further of His Divinity.

Who is the woman in Genesis 3:15? When would she appear? Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." Look for the word woman in the Gospels and her identity is revealed. That term, comes up again in John 2 at the Wedding in Cana. Jesus calls His mother Mary "woman". It comes up still again at the foot of the cross. "Woman behold your son. Son behold your mother". Woman. Who is the woman to come, prophesized in this passage? It is Mary.

From Mary the Christ would inherit his humanity. From His Father His Divinity. And His Divinity would purify all Humanity from every sin.

Now that is hope for the season!

We are reminded that it is a hope not without its cost. The serpent bruises the heel of the Christ. It is not a mortal wound for Christ is the one who ultimately crushes the head of the serpent. But nevertheless the serpent bruises the heel of Christ. He bruises and bruises and bruises from the moment he is born.

It is just as St. John saw in Revelation. Genesis, John's Gospel and The Revelation of St. John are so wondrously connected as we have been learning in Bible Class. Genesis 1 connected to John 1 and both connected to Revelation. In Revelation we read: "And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it." Everyone he could influence to work destruction he influenced. Everyone who could possibly be persuaded he persuaded. Herod became his minion. And as we read in the Gospel account his hatred and fury rose to such a height that he ordered the death of the boys of Bethlehem ages two and under while the Holy Family fled through wilderness to Egypt.

Satan bruised until the end - until all the prophesies of Isaiah would be fulfilled.

<sup>5</sup> But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,  
*He was* bruised for our iniquities;  
 The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,  
 And by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53

Indeed, it was a hope not without its cost. The cost continues even for those of us of the family who follow Him. There is a reason that Christmas Week became surrounded with festivals of the martyrs. December 26<sup>th</sup> we commemorate the Feast of Stephen. December 27<sup>th</sup> we commemorate St. John. December 31<sup>st</sup> there are the Holy Innocents. Satan strikes the heel. He strikes the heel also but he cannot crush the head. He cannot utterly slay us. He may do violence to the body but cannot touch the soul. We know what the Almighty has to say about that (Luke 12:4).

<sup>4</sup>"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

Indeed, it was a hope not without its cost. Yet from His Divine Family to the Holy Family Jesus came that he might bring healing, not just to individuals but to families. He can bring healing to my family and your family this season. Perhaps, when we become enamored and maybe envious of all the nostalgic portrayals of the "old Fashioned" families of Christmas card fame that were after all never really present, may we take hope this day.

The hopes and fears of all the years were met in Thee this night.

Our families may be sifted. They may be tested. But we have great hope that the one who comes from an eternal family, enters into the Holy Family, bringing grace to our immediate families, taking us to join our brothers and sisters in Christ back to His Heavenly Family.

May this otherworldly attitude be our focus this season rather than the disappointment that is breed by all the nostalgia of yesteryears that never were and Christmas card families that never lived. Our family, true family is yet to be united. With angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven we laud and give you praise as Church Militant and Church Triumphant we unite to join the Family of God. Indeed, may this Holy Family be our focus and bring us joy this Christmas.

Amen.