

Christmas Day

Christmas is truly a global celebration. The decorations we put up have their origins in different parts of the world. Many of the carols we sing are translations of words composed centuries ago in lands far away. All the world adores Christ, and the legacy of peoples far and wide enters our hearts and homes whenever we celebrate Christmas.

This global impact fulfills a prophecy from today's psalm: "All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God." What began in a manger at Bethlehem became news that humble shepherds shared, news that ultimately spread to every country on earth. And those countries contribute something to our Christmas at home.

This good news has touched every human person. God's Word became flesh and dwelled among us. Humanity was already God's greatest creation, but now God dignified humanity even more with this historic moment. Human nature is frail, but God has infused it with his own divinity.

In the world of sports, when your football team is poised to break records, it becomes a source of pride to say, "I'm from Kansas City." In the world of religion, when your God descends to take on your own very form, it becomes a source of pride to say, "I'm a human being." That's the impact of Christmas.

The name "Jesus" means "Savior", and it explains why the angel instructs Joseph not to divorce his fiancé because she was with child, but rather to take her into his home. When Mary brings forth her son, the angel says to Joseph, "you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So here is the downside of Christmas. The reason God became human is because we needed some help. The reason football dominates Kansas City right now is that we've seen the worst a team can be—we needed some help.

The joy of Christmas magnifies when we realize who we are without Christ—each of us a hopeless individual doomed to die. But with Christ we are something more, and not just us, but every human being around the world.

For this reason, the words of our psalm today ring strongly. "All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God." Christmas reaches the ends of the earth, and it brings a particular message to each person in every land: No matter where you feel you are a loser, God has saving power. God's will to save is so strong, that the angel was told to instruct Joseph to give the child a name that means Savior, so we won't miss the point.

Each of us has failed. Each of us has said things we wish we could take back. Each of us has done things that offended the very people we love, the values we hold dear. Each of us has cheated, lied, and betrayed those who relied on us. We have sinned—each of us, the world over. We cannot save ourselves. But there's good news. God has come to the rescue in the form of a little child whose very name brings us hope. Christ grants us forgiveness. In him, together with all the world, we see the saving power of God and rejoice to share good news.