

**“Be Born in Us Today — Bringing POWER”**

Our text for this fourth Sunday of Advent is part of this morning’s Old Testament lesson from Exodus 15:1-6, especially v. 6. “Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, *I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His Name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host He cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in POWER; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.*”

If you ever went to a Vacation Bible School or were a member of a church Youth Group, you might find something strangely familiar with the song that’s sung in this morning’s O. T. text from Exodus 15. Somebody condensed it into what’s become known as **“The Horse and Rider Song”**. In fact, it’s often included as a song in Passover Haggadahs. It’s short and fast, and the words are, *“I will sing unto the Lord. For He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and rider thrown into the sea. The Lord, my God, my strength, my song. Has now become my victory. The Lord is God and I will praise Him, My Father is God and I will EXALT Him!”*

Arching over the life of every **BELIEVER** is the great sacred story of **the mighty acts of God**. And note that this particular famous story of **divine rescue** (the parting of the Red Sea) is highlighted by the displays of power and strength that mark **God’s** victories over **God’s** enemies. And **with** those victories came the songs God’s people sang in **response!** But notice that, unlike surrounding pagan kings and nations that composed songs **bragging** about the **king’s** prowess or some military **general’s** conquests, the victory songs of the Bible aren’t about personal bravado or chest-pounding. They aren’t even celebrations of **nations** like a “national anthem”. **These** victory songs all give **GOD** the glory, celebrating who God **IS** and what God **DOES**.

The very **first** of all these songs appearing in the Bible is in our Old Testament Lesson from **Exodus 15**. The song is sometimes called **“The Song of Moses.”** However, there’s also **another** “Song of Moses” in **Deuteronomy 34**, sung not long before Moses **died**. In fact, to **distinguish** between the two, our Jewish friends call this song in Exodus 15, **“The Song by the SEA.”** And that’s exactly where the song was first sung...on dry ground on the **OTHER** side of the **Red Sea**. When fickle Pharaoh

changed his mind about letting God's people **go**, he ordered his Egyptian soldiers to chase and **trap** the fleeing Children of Israel right up against the edge of the water. Seeing no way **out**, God's chosen people were at the verge of **surrendering** and going back into **slavery**!

However, in one of the most famous displays of divine **POWER ever**—it wasn't Charleton Heston OR Moses who parted the waters and provided a way out for the Children of Israel to walk across the bottom of the sea with towering walls of water on either side. It was all and only about almighty **GOD** Who **collapsed** the waters on Pharaoh's army and destroyed it. Israel had no "bragging rights" to **self-praise** or **national pride** here. Their freedom had depended solely on **God's** character and actions...in other words, God's "*mighty power to save*".

So right there, Moses and the people—maybe two million strong—sang their "**Song by the Sea**", probably written by Moses himself. It's a **victory** song, but even **more**, it's a song celebrating **the Lord**. The focus of the song is on the Lord's amazing **power** over the forces of **nature**, over the enemies of God's **people**, and over history itself!

**First** of all, the song is sung to the **Lord**, that is, to **Yahweh**, "**the Great I Am**". That's the name by which Moses **knew** the Lord. Remember Moses' encounter with the burning bush? **Ten times** in this song, "the Lord" (the common translation for Yahweh) is used as a celebration of who the Lord **is** and what the Lord **does**.

Throughout the song, **strength, power, majesty, holiness, glory** and **steadfast love** characterize "the Lord"! Because that's Who the Lord **IS**! The "Song by the Sea" is a celebration of the character and attributes of our God at work in a very **pivotal** moment in our sacred history. For 12 verses, the song sees the victory of the exodus from Egypt as all **God's doing**.

And then the **last strophe** of the song (vss. 13-18) looks ahead to the Lord's **NEXT** victories as Israel faces pagan **Philistia, Moab, Edom and Canaan**. But just as the Egyptians sank "like a stone" (v. 5) so the Canaanites will become still "like a stone" (v. 16).

All of this leads to the confident affirmation in the final verse that "**The Lord will reign forever and ever**" (v. 18). In the verses that follow, **Miriam**, the sister of Moses and Aaron, sings the chorus of "The Song by the Sea," and accompanied by women dancers and tambourines: "*Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider He has thrown into the sea*" (v. 21).

In the great, grand, **sacred** story that hovers over our **personal** stories, the pattern is repeated often, isn't it? God acts in **POWER**, and God's people respond with **song**. But echoing **this** song is **another** "song by the sea" at the other end of the Bible in **Revelation 15**. There St. John sees "a sea of **glass**" and calls the song that he hears "**the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb**" (vv 2-3). It's sung by those who've seen God defeat "the **beast**." They sing, "*Great and amazing are Your deeds, O Lord God the **Almighty!***" (v. 3).

If ever there was a season when we sing **victory** songs to the Lord, it's in this Advent-Christmas season. We hear the ancient songs of **Isaiah**, the song of **Zechariah**, the song of the **angels** over Bethlehem, and the song of **Simeon** in the temple. And of course, unforgettable is the song of **Mary** in Luke 1 known as "**The Magnificat**," taking its name from Mary's first words, "*My soul **magnifies** the Lord.*" In her song, too, the mighty **power** of the Lord is celebrated. She sings, "*... for He Who is **MIGHTY** has done great things for me...*" (Luke 1:49). For **Mary**, being chosen by God to give birth miraculously to the promised Messiah was the sum result of God's **mighty power** alone.

I don't know if you ever thought about this, but there really are only **two** basic kinds of "**magnifying**": "**microscope** magnifying" and "**telescope** magnifying". The **one** makes a small thing look **bigger than it IS**. The **other** makes a **big thing** begin to look as big as it **REALLY** is. So, when Mary—or for that matter, when King David sings in Ps. 69, "*I will **magnify** God with thanksgiving,*"—he doesn't mean, "I'll make a **small God** look bigger than He actually **IS!**" No, David means, "*I will do everything I can in my song to make a **BIG GOD** begin to look as big as He **REALLY** is!*"

You and I aren't called to be **microscopes**. We're called to be **TELESCOPES**, and **especially** during this Advent and Christmas season. Christians aren't called to be con-men who "magnify" their product all out of proportion to reality, when they know the competitor's product is far **superior**. There is **nothing** and **nobody** superior to our **God!** And don't let the world convince you that there **IS!** So then, the calling of those who love God is to make His greatness begin to look as great as it really **IS**. That's why we **exist** and why we were **saved**...or as St. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, "*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession (now here it comes) that you may **PROCLAIM** the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" The whole duty of the believer can be summed up in this: **feel, think, and act** in a way that will make God look as **great** as He really **IS**. Be a **telescope** for the world of the **infinite starry wealth** of God's glory...**AND POWER!**

Do you remember Isaiah's prophecy of the promised Messiah in Isa. 9:6? It said in **Hebrew** that this Messiah would be called "**El Gebor**," which means

**"MIGHTY God."** Very literally, the Hebrew word **"geboris"** is usually used to describe a mighty **warrior** or hero, giving us an idea of the **mission** of the **Messiah**, because throughout the history of **Israel**, God regularly revealed Himself as a God Who **defends** and comes to the **rescue** of His chosen people, **as in THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT.**

But have you ever considered what a **PARADOX** it is that Isaiah says a humble baby in a manger should be called the **"MIGHTY ONE"**? Well, **remember** that even as a **BABY**, Jesus revealed His **POWER!** The birth of the Christ Child brought **MULTITUDES** of **angels** in the sky above, as well as simple shepherds from their flocks on the hillside. **MidNIGHT** suddenly became **midDAY** as the glory of the Lord shone all around them! His birth affected all of the heavens **ABOVE** as a unique **STAR** appeared. That **star** affected the **MAGI**, who they left their homes and made that **long journey** to Jerusalem. And then, **their** announcement even shook up King Herod and his court, as well as the populace under his rule.

The great preacher, *C. H. Spurgeon*, once summed up the **Christ Child** in just three simple words: **"INFANT, yet INFINITE."** In other words, this fragile and vulnerable little **Baby** in a make-shift, hay-filled, substitute **cradle**, ultimately also revealed Himself to be the **eternal, all-powerful Son of God**, Who came in **WEAKNESS** to ultimately rescue and redeem His people **drowning** in a sea of sin by powerfully overcoming sin, death and the devil.

But to be **honest** with you, it's all that **FRAGILITY**—that **"sweetness and light"** picture of the newborn Savior that we've learned to envision during this time of year—that sometimes **troubles** me, because it detracts and diminishes from the **ALMIGHTY POWER** that this Christ Child brought **WITH** Him to earth to conquer **SIN** and even the power of **DEATH ITSELF!** So just **ASK yourself** for a moment if it wouldn't be more appropriate to be singing loud, boisterous **VICTORY chants** at Christmastime rather than so many sweet, subtle **LULLABIES?**

Here, **TOO**, is the **PURPOSE** of the **ADVENT** season—yes, to prepare us not only for the divine **BLESSING, RENEWAL, and GUIDANCE** we've been talking about during the last three Sundays that the Savior's arrival **BRINGS** to us—but **additionally**, to prepare us to receive the **POWER** that He **ALSO** brings into the lives of those who **welcome Him** not only as their **SAVIOR** but also as their **almighty LORD** Who now empowers **THEIR** lives.

My friends, perhaps **the most important question** you can **ASK someone** during this Christmas **PREP** time that we call **ADVENT** isn't what kind of **PRESENT** you might be giving so-and-so **OR** what **YOU** hope you'll be getting. The most important and

relevant question we should be asking our dearest relatives, friends, neighbors or even **STRANGERS** is **THIS** one: ***“WHO DO YOU THINK THIS ‘JESUS’ IS?”***

Few questions could be more relevant at **Christmastime**, because I just read a new **Lifeway Research Study** showing that well over **HALF** of all Americans believe in an all-out Christological **HERESY** about Jesus! Only, **41% of Americans**, correctly believe that the Son of God existed as part of the **Triune Godhead from eternity**...in other words, long before Jesus ever was born in Bethlehem.” That means the remaining **59% percent** either **DO NOT believe** or are **UNSURE** whether they believe that the Son of God existed prior to the Incarnation—the **Nativity**—when this Second Person of the Trinity took upon Himself a **human nature**, in order to suffer and die for our sins.

And so, we’d do well to keep in mind that out of the many worshippers who will walk through church doors on this coming Saturday (Christmas **Eve**) or this coming Sunday morning (Christmas **DAY**)—**many** of them may hold to a **heretical misunderstanding** of the Trinity. And so, they may listen to the **sermons** and sing the **songs**, but to be **blunt**, they don’t yet **realize** Who that “Christ in the manger” truly **IS**—the **eternal God Who also became human being**, so that **He could suffer and die in our place for our sins and grant us an eternal place in heaven**.

So then, rather than just casting a narrow focus on what Christ **DID**, it’s just as important to clarify Holy Scripture’s vision to others of Who Christ **IS**. John 1:1-3, makes it quite **CLEAR** what is the **essence** and **nature** of the Child in the manger...the One Whom (33 years later) the Apostle **Thomas** bowed **DOWN** to and then humbly acknowledged as ***“my Lord and my GOD!”***

If you’ve read St. John’s **GOSPEL**, as well as his three **epistles**, John is always eager to introduce the saving work of Christ, but before he **DOES** so, he first lifts us outside the confines of history to contemplate Who this Son of God **IS** from all **ETERNITY**—the Living and Eternal **Word** Who not only was **WITH** God at the creation, but Who also **WAS** and **IS** the same God Who created everything by simply calling it into being!

And note that with this God/man Messiah’s arrival **ALSO** comes great power for each one of His **Followers**—His redeemed and forgiven people just like us. He’s placed in each of His baptized people the **PRESENCE AND POWER** of His Holy Spirit for each of us to sing and share His message of **victory** as boldly and joyfully as Moses and his people did back on the shores of the Red Sea. And it’s a **powerful** Christmas song we have in our **hearts** and on our **lips** about a **mighty Savior** Who has come to save His people from their sins!

Let me **ASK** you then: Whom have you personally invited to **share** in singing that sweet song of salvation this upcoming Christmas **Eve** and/or Christmas **Day**? You know, it **IS** a joyful song of **VICTORY**, and as the angel said to the shepherds in Bethlehem's **field**, it's intended by God for **ALL** people, including your friends, relatives, and neighbors.

The church **sings**, not just during Advent and Christmas, but through **ALL** the seasons of the year! It's because our songs are our **witness** to the power of God **still** working wonders among us with **HIS MIGHT** in the midst of **our weakness**.

It reminds me of a true story I heard about a man in his seventies who explained on a New Member Sunday why he had decided to **join** his new church. He said, "*For 40 years I would walk by this church and hear the people inside **singing**. I listened to them sing about the greatness of their **God**, and I listened to them sing for a very long time. One day, I finally decided to walk in and **join** their song.*" And guess what? The congregation decided it only appropriate that the gentleman would be officially welcomed into the church...wearing a **choir robe**!

As this Advent season draws to a close and the victorious sounds of Christmas grow **louder**, let's also get ready to celebrate not only a "meek and mild" Baby on a manger but also a **MIGHTY, ALL-POWERFUL God** by personally inviting others to **join** our chorus this coming Christmas in praying **AND** singing, "**O holy Child of Bethlehem ... Be born in us today.**" Amen!