

Jesu Juva

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The stole that I am wearing tonight - the only white stole that I have in this set - is really an Easter stole. The symbol is a picture of the victorious Lamb of God, risen from the dead with His victory banner. And the words at the bottom of the other side are Hebrew and say: *I know that my Redeemer lives* - a quote from Job (19:25) expressing his confidence in the resurrection. Words he spoke in the midst of great tragedy and sadness for him.

Sometimes I think I really ought to get a Christmas stole - one with more Christmassy pictures and words. Maybe a picture of the nativity up here, and the words *Immanuel*, or *the Light shines in the darkness*, or something like that, down here. . . . But then I thought: really, what could be more Christmassy than this? For tonight, can we not also say and confess and sing with joy: *I know that my Redeemer lives*? For tonight, our Redeemer now does live, and is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Tonight we remember the Son of God, born for us, alive for us, as one of us, to do this - to redeem us. To take our place under the judgment of God for our sins.

That's really what all the readings tonight were about. Not just that a child is born, but a child is born **for us**, to save us.

A child is born for Adam and Eve, who blew it, big time. Who disregarded God's Word, questioned God and His goodness, and followed their own wisdom and desire. But God promised them a child would be born to do to the serpent what the serpent had done to them. To put right what had been made wrong. Tonight, Adam and Eve say with us: *I know that my Redeemer lives*.

A child is born for Abraham, this man who was a nobody until God made him a somebody. Out of all the people on earth, God chose him - purely by grace; nothing in Abraham made God choose him. God chose him to be the father of God's people. To be the one whose descendant would be The One through whom ***all the nations of the earth would be blessed***. Tonight, Abraham says with us: *I know that my Redeemer lives*.

A child is born for Israel, who had walked away from the light of God's Word and walked in the darkness of sin and death. Israel, who had turned to the worship of false gods and so whose nation had been chopped down to a stump by God to discipline them and bring them back to Him. For though they turned away from the Lord, the Lord would not turn away from them. The light would come again, He promised. A branch would grow from that stump, He promised. He promised to raise them again, to give them faith, to give them hope. Tonight, Israel says with us: *I know that my Redeemer lives.*

A child is born for Mary, who like Abraham was a nobody until God made her a somebody. Out of all the people on earth, God chose her - purely by grace; nothing in Mary made God choose her. God chose her to be the mother of His Son. To be the one through whom He would receive His human body and nature, to lay down that life on the cross. A grisly death Mary would witness from the foot of the cross. Tonight, Mary says with us: *I know that my Redeemer lives.*

A child is born for the shepherds, who were up late that night, keeping watch over their flocks. God chose them to be the first to come and see the Lamb of God, come to take away the sin of the world. Shepherds to keep watch over His Lamb . . . though, really, this Lamb had come to watch over them, and save them. Tonight, the shepherds say with us: *I know that my Redeemer lives.*

And finally, a child is born for you. For you who like Adam and Eve, often blow it, big time; who follow not His Word but your own wisdom and desires. For you who like Abraham and Mary, God chose to be His own purely by grace. For you who like Israel walk in the darkness of sin and death. For you who like the shepherds have come tonight to keep watch over the Lamb who really watches over you. Tonight we say with them: *I know that my Redeemer lives.*

Our Redeemer, who as John told us shows us ***the love of God*** and is the love of God for us. Our Redeemer, who as Paul wrote to Titus is ***the goodness and loving kindness of God***, come to wash us clean of our sins and give us the hope of eternal life. Tonight we confess: *I know that my Redeemer lives.* God has fulfilled His promise. The same promise made to so many people over so many years, now fulfilled in this child. *Which means that life will never be the same again.*

Which is a message we need to hear on Christmas 2012 perhaps more than ever. For this has been a year, perhaps more than most, here and around the world, filled with tragedy, filled with sorrow, filled with disaster, filled with questions from so many. *How could this be? Why? What are we going to do now?*

Well, the answer to: *How could this be?* and *Why?* is sin. Not particular sins, but the sin in us that descends upon others, the sin in others that descends upon us,

and the sin that has effected the world so that it is not the peaceful, ordered place it was created to be. The sin which has disordered all creation and plunged us in chaos and death. That's *how* and *why*.

But the answer to: *What are we going to do now?* must be answered in two ways. **First**, by acknowledging that it is the wrong question! For first and foremost it is not: what are WE going to do now, but what is GOD going to do now? A faithful expectation and anticipation of God's work. How will He act? How will He show mercy? How will He use the tragedies and sorrows and troubles of this world for His good? For *I know, I KNOW that my Redeemer lives!* And if He lives, He lives for us; for you. He lives to save you and work good for you, even in the midst of a world falling apart. Like the believers in Old Testament times, we wait to see how God will act and how He will keep His promises to us now. For He will.

But **secondly**, *what are we going to do now?* John told us the answer to that. He said, ***"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*** Love one another - that's what we do. Love those God has gathered to you and around you. And not with an abstract love, but a concrete love. Provide for those in need, forgive, pray, speak the Word of God, help, give of yourself, encourage, console. Be there for others, just as your God, your Saviour, your Redeemer is here for you. For He didn't just love you from afar, *He came*. Born as a baby as we remember this night, and here for you still in His Word and Sacraments. *That your life never be the same*. That you never have a darkness without the light of His love. That you never live without the hope of His promises. That you never wonder where God is for you. He is in the manger. He is on the cross. He is here. For you. *I know that my Redeemer lives*.

I know that my Redeemer lives and will never die again.

I know that my Redeemer lives and my sins are forgiven.

I know that my Redeemer lives and gives me life now and life forever.

I know that my Redeemer lives and will never leave me.

I know that my Redeemer lives and in the end will take me home to be with Him forever.

All that is the message for us tonight. Not just that a child is born, but that a child is born **for you**. A Saviour, a Redeemer, ***which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*** Behold, your Redeemer lives. See how He loves you!

Like Mary, ***keep all these things and ponder them in your heart.***

Like the shepherds, return to your homes ***glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have heard and seen, as it was told unto you.***

And like Job, keep these words always on your lips. In good times and bad, in joy and in sorrow, in ease and in trouble, with much or with little: *I know that my Redeemer lives*. For when you have Him, truly, you have everything. And that make this Christmas and every Christmas a *Merry* Christmas!

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.