

## **THE LORD'S BIRTHDAY**

Rev. N. Bruce Rogers

What do you think about when you think about Christmas?

Do you think about the Christmas tree, with all the exciting presents under it, wrapped up with colorful paper and pretty ribbons? Do you think about Christmas cards, and about hanging up your stockings? Do you think about going shopping for presents and hearing the special music of Christmas that fills the air? Do you think about all the good things there will be to eat, or about visiting relatives and friends, and playing with cousins and others? Or do you perhaps think of Christmas Tableaux, and of singing special hymns and hearing the Christmas story read from the Word?

It is true that all these things and more are a part of the celebration of Christmas, and they make it an exciting time for us. But do you know that none of these things is why we have Christmas?

We do not have Christmas in order to have Christmas trees and presents. We do not have Christmas in order to have Christmas cards or stockings, or so that we can have special music to hear and sights to see. We do not have Christmas so that we can have good things to eat and parties. We do not have Christmas so that we can have Tableaux or special church services.

We could have these things any time, if we wanted to. All we would have to do is to plan a little and spend some money, and we could have these things any time. And what is more, do you know that once upon a time, long ago, people did not have many of these things, and still they had Christmas? So now what do you think? Why do we have Christmas?

We have Christmas for the same reason that we celebrate birthdays. When we celebrate someone's birthday, and say "happy birthday" and give presents, we are saying that we are glad he or she was born, and we try to show that we are glad. That is why we send birthday cards and give birthday presents and bake special birthday cakes, to show that we are glad someone was born.

It is for the same reason that we have Christmas, because at Christmas time we also celebrate someone's birthday. Only it is the most special birthday ever, because at Christmas time we celebrate the Lord's birthday. We celebrate the Lord's birthday because we are so very glad that He was born into the world!

The Lord was born into the world so that we could see Him and so that He could straighten out the world. Let's talk about those two things. Let's talk about seeing the Lord, and about His straightening out the world.

First, about seeing the Lord: Of course we cannot see the Lord with our eyes, because after He finished His work on this earth He went back to heaven. But because He was born and lived for a while in this world, there are many stories about Him in the Word, and we can still see Him in those stories with the eyes of our mind. This would not be possible if He had not first been born into this world. So because of the Lord's being born into this world, and because of the stories in the Word about Him, we can still see the Lord in our minds and get to know Him and love Him.

Secondly, about straightening out the world: When the Lord was born, the world had gotten to be not a very nice place. Evil people were taking over and they were teaching other people to be wicked, too. Many people were so afraid that they could not think straight. And evil spirits from hell were beginning to be able to get back into this world, by taking over people's minds and controlling them. So the Lord was born into this world so that He could cast out those evil spirits, and so that He could teach people the truth and teach them to be kind and gentle again, to love each other and live a life that would lead to heaven. This also would not have been possible if the Lord had not been born. Because the Lord was born, He was able to straighten out the world, where we can now live without being controlled by evil spirits.

So at Christmas we celebrate the Lord's birthday because we are glad that He was born. And this is also why we celebrate Christmas in the way we do. He came into the world to teach us to love each other, so we try especially hard at Christmas to show that we love each other.

That is why we give each other presents, to show that we love each other. That is why we send Christmas cards, and do all those other nice things, to show we love each other. The special music—almost all of it was written to make people especially happy. The good food people make—it is all to make people happy. The visits to family and friends—it is to show them that we love them and that we care about them. If we hang up our stockings for Santa Claus, it is because Santa Claus stands for the spirit of kindness, and we are showing that we want the spirit of kindness to come into our homes.

In these ways we show how glad we are that the Lord was born! We also show how glad we are by listening to His Word, listening to the stories about the time when the Lord was born, and about what happened then and how it came about. This is the very most special way that we celebrate the Lord's birthday at Christmas, when we listen to the Word and think about the Lord. Then, like the shepherds and the wise men, we too are glad and rejoice at the Lord's coming into the world, and worship Him in our hearts with great joy.

Amen.