



The Presentation of Christ

The Collect

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Treasures do not find us, we find treasures. Gold and silver are valuable, not so much because of their beauty as because of their scarcity. A virtuous woman is worth more than rubies because she is more scarce than rubies. *Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*

(Prov 31:10) **1. Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it.** Things that are valuable must be sought out with earnest endeavor. For precious gems and metals, the seeker must be equipped with an intimate knowledge of the gem or ore for which he searches; moreover, he must expend much labor in mining those treasures from the earth. **2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.** Perhaps the Bereans are our best example for diligence in all of Scripture: *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* (Acts 17:11) I will now ask an embarrassing question, my friend (if you are unlike the Bereans): Do you search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so; or do you simply sit at the bottom of your pew, as an ocean oyster, and consume whatever good or bad bread falls from the lips of your pastor? Should we not be Eagle Christians, as were the Bereans, to prove all things by Holy Writ ere we digest it? Even the best of clergymen make mistakes in both content and interpretation. A good rule of military intelligence applies here: "Gather intelligence by all means available, confirm that intelligence by other intelligence, and then reconfirm that intelligence." When we commit our souls to battle against such a formidable array of demons as we confront, we should be sure that our knowledge of the battlefield is accurate, shouldn't we?

3. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Man makes far greater effort to find precious jewels than in finding truth. He searches out and mines these treasures through artificial light sources in the dark mines. He will risk the terrors of collapsing mines in the dark depths of the earth to secure these treasures. Some of our great missionaries of the past have

gone to the same depths of darkness and danger to carry the most precious of all treasures to a depraved people – the Word of God. They carry the Light of Christ – not some artificial, manmade light – to the very Valleys of the Shadow of Death. Where Christ is loved, death is no more real than a shadow. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.* (Psalms 23:4a) 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. Treasure seekers do their searching and sink their shafts far from the notice of men – on dark continents and in faraway lands. They expend great energy, but their labors are covered and erased by the sands of time. As the Arabian *wady*, intermittent in its flowing, so the rivers of treasure seekers dry up and are forgotten.

What of the treasures of the heart? From when do they come? They come from the deep mines of God's Word where the Light of the World is the illuminator, and the diligent mind the pick axe. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. God has commanded the earth, through the cultivation by labor, to yield bread. Amazing that the cold, dead nature of soil could produce something of a very different nature – bread! Amazing, too, that the Bread of Life could change a worldly man's nature into an entirely different nature, isn't it? Some of the minerals and elements of the earth must be heated by fire to separate them from the dross and chaff. So does God often 'turn up the heat' beneath His people to cause them to be separated from the undesirable elements of the world. God knows that the earth is unrefined and base; however, from the stones and dust of it, He can bring forth His chosen Elect. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.

The miner works in deep and dark shafts that the eye of the bird of prey and the animal predator cannot see or discover. 7. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: 8. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. The world, too, is blind to the ways of the righteous. It seems senseless to the world for the righteous to spend so much time studying God's Word to the detriment of so many sensual pleasures that only the world appreciates. The unrighteous are like those vultures and roaring lions that cannot see, or understand, the hidden things of God. Through the wonderful facilities God has given men, they are able to actually move mountains and re-route rivers. While living in Esfahan, Iran, I became friends with a Japanese gentleman named, Satoshi Nagata, who was the Far Eastern Director for Kumi-gai Construction (now Bechtel Corp). His team drilled a tunnel through the Zagros Mountain range 35 ft wide and re-routed a portion of the Karun River (the Ulai of Daniel the prophet) so that both sides of the mountain range could be fertile. This is the same river, in the eastern Province of Elam in Iran, from which Daniel the prophet saw visions near the Palace at Susa: *And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan (Susa) in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.* (Dan 8:2) 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.

11. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light. 12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. Man is able to bind up the waters of rivers through dams such as the Grand Coulee and Hoover Dams. God provides the wisdom in man's inner part to know these things. See all of the amazing discoveries in the natural world to which man is a party, but what of wisdom and understanding of the First Cause? The most important part of man is not how he deals with the natural world and its elements, but what he knows and understands of the spiritual world and the God to whom he must, at length,

answer. But man is gravely lacking in both wisdom of, and interest in, his Maker. It seems that Godly wisdom and understanding are inversely proportional to technological learning. Man is like the savage who never has tasted alcohol until it is given him. He then ascribes magical and supernatural powers to the substance and, through his ignorance thereof, becomes enslaved by it. Man is drunk with pride on his sudden acceleration in technology, so much so that he no longer believes himself to be finite. A disappointing surprise awaits such men according to the time of the LORD. All of the genius of man is but a foolish dribble in the eyes of God. Man feels himself all-important and all knowing – even to the point of denying his Creator. Man claims to know precisely how the world and humanity came into existence contrary to the Word of the only Eye-Witness to Creation; yet, man cannot even produce a flea, or a worm that has life in it.

14. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Please observe that all of the riches of nature deny its possession of wisdom. Wisdom is not for sale, but is a gift to those who diligently seek after it. How foolish of man to attempt to gain the whole world and lose his own soul! One soul is such a small thing compared to the world and, yet, the soul will survive the world in either Heaven or Hell.

Job asks a very telling question next: 20. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? I hope the readers of this devotion will be able to answer this question for all people of god should know that wisdom only comes from God. If we are wise as Solomon, it is not OUR wisdom, but wisdom given by God. Wisdom is hidden from all creatures (including man) who do not appeal to God for a grant of it. 21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. 22. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

Only God can supply that most valuable of treasures – WISDOM. Wisdom does not lose its worth, even at the moment of death; but is even most valuable at that moment. The greatest wisdom is to know God, and to accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior. Having done this through the Wisdom of God, we may lay our bones down to a comfortable sleep with a high expectation of the dawning of the morning. 23. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; 25. To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: Yes, it is true; God creates nothing without also making a WAY for it. He has made a WAY for you and me to life, not death. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Prov 14:12) No, my friends: man's way is not God's WAY! What is that WAY? ***I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*** (John 14:6) God created you, and He has not left you as orphans without a WAY.

27. Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. God has clearly declared the way for man through His Son, Jesus Christ. Have we not heard, nor have we not seen? Do we rationalize away the truth and wisdom of God in order to take license to sin? 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. Have we begun our wisdom in fearing the Lord, for His wrath is great to those who do not depart from every evil way?

We shall learn that the fear with which we began our journey to God will end in uncompromising trust in His love, Mercy, and Grace. Have you tasted it?