**The Revelation of Jesus (Luke 3:15-22)**

 The revelation of the identity of Jesus invites us to submit our lives to Him. Greetings to you on this Armenian Christmas as we celebrate the birth and self-revelation of Jesus Christ to the whole world. It is a joy for us to exclaim (as our forefathers have done in centuries past), “Christ is born and revealed, blessed is the revelation of Christ!” (in Armenian). Why is this so? The reason is that today, we do not simply celebrate the fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies in the birth of Christ, but also God the Father’s affirmation of the identity of Jesus. In today’s Scripture passage, John the Baptist presents us with a picture of just how unique and incomparable Jesus is as a person. Therefore, with this in mind, let us examine the sayings of John the Baptist regarding our Savior. Once again, I want to establish to you that the revelation of the identity of Jesus invites us to submit our lives to Him. Let us, then, move on to our study…

 ***Jesus is the Spirit-Fire Baptizer – the Son of God; our response to this truth is a matter of life or death.*** The Israelites had begun to fall in love with the person of John the Baptist. He preached the truth with such fearlessness that the questions began to arise in the peoples' hearts about him: “Could he be the one? Is it possible that he is the Savior who will set us free from these immoral governors?” However, John knew better. He baptized only with water – with a physical symbol. The One coming after him, the Savior, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. In other words, He would both judge the people and purify them just as fire does so and melts the gold to filter out the dross, and He would invite the people to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that their worship and their existence would become God-centered and filled with the hope of ultimate salvation. One man baptized with a simple symbol; the Other did so with the entirety of the Power of God, with a “baptism” that induced the fear-of-God, cleansing the people, that they would experience a new birth through His Spirit.

 That was not all that John the Baptist said, however. He also declared that he was not worthy to untie the sandals of the One coming after him. There is an old Rabbinic saying that went like this: “Every service that a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher, except the loosing of the sandal.” In other words, Jesus was so great that there was no comparison between Him and John.

 We find the most important and final declaration in the last verse of today’s passage: When Jesus is baptized, God speaks directly to those present and says, “You are My Beloved Son; I have been pleased with you.” (Literally). In other words, it was not only John that was inviting the people to a new spiritual existence; the Father also was establishing Jesus as the Beloved, God-Pleasing Son. This revelation did not only shake up the religious and political leaders of the day, but today as well, it is an invitation to consider our response to it.

 Have we entered the life of the baptism of Jesus? I do not speak of a baptism of simply water. I am speaking of the baptism of Spirit and fire. By Spirit, I mean to ask: do we have a living, personal, power-filled, grace-filled and revelation-filled relationship with Jesus Christ? Is our walk with Jesus a dialogue or a monologue? Is it a co-operation, or a solo feeling blindly in the darkness?

 Having said the above, we must ask ourselves: Have we subjected ourselves to the fire of Jesus, to the judging, sanctifying fire of His Spirit? Are we interested in a life of holiness? Are we moving forwards in our spiritual, moral and life-walk according to the lifestyle of holiness?

 Finally, the above two aspects of baptism are more easily fulfilled in our lives if we have honestly accepted Jesus Christ who is revealed to us at His Birth and Baptism as the Son of God, the Savior, who is equal to God the Father in all ways. (Again, I ask you,) Who is Jesus for you? Is He truly your Lord, or just in title? To what kind of baptism have you subjected yourself? One of only water, or a baptism of Spirit and fire, in other words one leading to a living Spiritual life characterized by holiness. These are the questions that arise when we remember and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Epiphany, or the revelation of God from above.

 However, the most important reality (in this message) is to know that if your baptism is only of water and that you have not subjected yourself to the fire of Christ and His Spirit, then you are prohibiting yourself by your own hand from having a relationship with Him. Without a relationship with Christ, your water baptism loses its meaning. In other words, if you have only trusted for your salvation in a ritual, then that ritual has become an idol for you and your salvation is not assured. Therefore, come and subject yourself to Jesus Christ – allow Him to cleanse you with His judgment-fire and thus have a living and powerful relationship with Him through the Holy Spirit.Jesus is the Spirit-Fire Baptizer – the Son of God; our response to this truth is a matter of life or death. The revelation of the identity of Jesus invites us to submit our lives to Him.

 May God give us the grace today to submit to Him once again that baptizes us with the Spirit and fire, The Son of God Himself. Amen.