**The Unity of Advent (Romans 15:5-13)**

 Our Savior was born of the people of Israel, but He united people all throughout His life.

 As we enjoy the second week of the Advent season, we encounter an important reality in Jesus ministry with today’s Scriptures taken from the Epistle to the Romans. Despite that Jesus’ ministry was not as far-reaching as others (such as Paul of Tarsus), yet He opened the door of salvation to all people, not just His own. Today we’re going to be talking about the uniting characteristic of Jesus’ Advent or arrival to earth. The Lord Jesus, with His coming to earth, united human beings from different ethnic groups, from various economic classes, and espousing hailing from different ideological schools. Once again, I’d like to stress that our Savior was born of the people of Israel, but He united people all throughout His life. Let us talk, then, about unity…

 Just as Jesus’ Advent united us to Himself, we are called to keep and grow that unity between us believers as well, because we all belong to Him. When Paul the Apostle was writing to the church in Rome, he was instructing the believers to be in harmony with each other among the different social classes and spiritual maturity levels among the faithful. In the beginning of the fifteenth chapter, he had been speaking about the duty of the believers. It was the duty of the Christ-follower to respect and encourage his or her weaker brother or sister – especially when it is found that they are higher or stronger in their status, whether socially, economically, or spiritually. Paul was warning the church members not to become proud over correcting others’ failures or to become absorbed with pleasing ourselves. The topic had begun earlier in the letter, around the fourteenth chapter, dealing with the question of eating or not eating meat that had been previously used in idol worship... In addition, there were holidays that some held, while others did not. Some did not eat meat that was previously used for pagan purposes, and others did. Some celebrated certain holidays while others considered every day the same. Paul was saying that neither was wrong or right; the issue was one of conscience and becoming a cause for stumbling. If Christ Himself judges the above with the standard of the presence or absence of faith, then it means that neither eating nor not eating was important to God. It was not important that one had a high economic status or low one. It was not important that one fasted while another feasted. It was the fast done *in faith*, the feast done *in faith*, that counted for the Lord. Whatever was not done in faith was sin, and that could wound the Church. The Lord says thru Paul, “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” It is more important for the Lord that we be of the same mind and praise God in unity rather than have a worship in which there are opposing factions and offended hearts.

 So, let us think for a moment: Our Savior, who is God, came down and united to himself the nature of a human being and thus united God and man in himself. Then, He united His rich spiritually wealthy position with an obscure, poor family, being born to unknown people, who were not even legally married when He was born! After that, He united His spiritual erudition to His disciples' spiritual ignorance and weakness, and they ministered all together as a united group all over Galilee. Still after that, He stretched his hand out on many an occasion and united His healthy body with a sick person’s body, and healing it, showed what happens when sickness is united for a second to the presence of Jesus the Messiah – of course, we know that that sickness disappears. When He united His Life-containing body to death, death itself was defeated; and when He united His Spirit with the believers gathered in prayer in the Upper Room, He united the nations of the world to His and His apostles’ adopted family.

 Jesus did nothing but unite; but especially, He united us to Himself, and to each other (because of our common faith in Him). Having said the above, what is it that we have to do?

 It is this: that Jesus as Paul the Apostle was saying, let us not destroy the work of God among us for petty and secondary issues. If your conscience is clear regarding a particular behavior or practice, act with that clarity of conscience toward your brother or sister. If your conscience causes you to suffer because it is not clear, do not do that which you had in mind to perform. Or, similarly, do not eat if your eating is going to cause your brother or sister to stumble in their faith walk. Otherwise, our walk of love in the Lord can be negatively affected, and we may separate ourselves from God’s righteousness, peace, and joy as members of His Kingdom.

Therefore, let us be united in our thinking; let us be in agreement with each other. Let us be after those things that create peace within and between us, also causing us to grow spiritually. Just as Jesus’ Advent united us to Himself, we are called to keep and grow that unity between us believers as well, because we all belong to Him.

Therefore, let us come together and work for unity. Let us work for love and peace (among and around us). If we have issues with each other, let us encourage and guide each other in love, in prayers, and with humility.

My prayer is that we will all be in agreement with these thoughts. Our Savior was born of the people of Israel, but He united people all throughout His life. May the Lord Bless you all. Amen.