



TRUTH IS
SPRUNG OUT OF
THE EARTH

Sermon 185

That day is called the birthday of the Lord on which the Wisdom of God manifested Himself as a speechless child and the Word of God wordlessly uttered the sound of a human voice. His divinity, although hidden, was revealed by heavenly witness to the Magi and was announced to the shepherds by angelic voices. With yearly ceremony, therefore, we celebrate this day which saw the fulfilment of the prophecy: "Truth is sprung out of the earth: and justice hath looked down from heaven" (Psalm 85:11). Truth, eternally existing in the bosom of the Father, has sprung from the earth so that He might exist also in the bosom of a mother. Truth, holding the world in place, has sprung from the earth so that He might be carried in the hands of a woman.

Truth, incorruptibly nourishing the happiness of the angels, has sprung from the earth in order to be fed by human milk. Truth, whom the heavens cannot contain, has sprung from the earth so that He might be placed in a manger. For whose benefit did such unparalleled greatness come in such lowliness? Certainly for no personal advantage, but definitely for our great good, if only we believe. Arouse yourself, O man; for your God has become man. “Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee” (Ephesians 5:14). For you, I repeat, God has become man. If He had not thus been born in time, you would have been dead for all eternity. Never would you have been freed from sinful flesh, if He had not taken upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh. Everlasting misery would have engulfed you if He had not taken this merciful form. You would not have been restored to life, had He not submitted to your death; you would have fallen, had He not succoured you; you would have perished, had He not come.

Let us joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the festal day on which the great and timeless One came from the great and timeless day to this brief span of our day. He has become for us justice, and sanctification, and redemption; so that, just as it is written, “Let him who takes pride, take pride in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30–31). For, so that we might not resemble the proud Jews who, “ignorant of the justice of God and seeking to establish their own, have not submitted to the justice of God” (Romans 10:3), when the Psalmist had said “Truth is sprung out of the earth,” he quickly added: “and justice hath looked down from heaven” (Psalm 85:11–12). He did this lest mortal frailty, arrogating this justice to itself, should call these blessings its own, and lest

man should reject the justice of God in his belief that he is justified, that is, made just through his own efforts. Truth is sprung out of the earth because Christ who said “I am the truth” (John 14:6) was born of a virgin; and “justice hath looked down from heaven” because, by believing in Him who was so born, man has been justified not by his own efforts but by God. “Truth is sprung out of the earth” because “the Word was made flesh” and “justice hath looked down from heaven” because “every good and perfect gift is from above” (John 1:14; James 1:17). Truth is sprung out of the earth, that is, His flesh was taken from Mary; and “justice hath looked down from heaven” because no one can receive anything unless it is given to him from heaven (John 3:27).

“Having been justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access by faith unto that grace in which we stand and exult in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1,2). With these few words, which you recognize as those of the Apostle, it gives me pleasure, my brethren, to mingle a few passages of the psalm and to find that they agree in sentiment. “Having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God” because “justice and peace have kissed”; “through our Lord Jesus Christ” because “truth is sprung out of the earth”; “through whom we also have access by faith unto that grace in which we stand, and exult in the hope of the glory of God”—and it does not say of our glory but “of the glory of God,” because justice has not proceeded from us but “hath looked down from heaven” (Psalm 85:11–12). Therefore, “let him who takes pride, take pride in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30–31), not in himself. Hence, when the Lord whose birthday we are celebrating today was born of the Virgin, the announcement of the an-

gelic choir was made in the words: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will” (Luke 2:14). How can peace exist on earth unless it be because “truth is sprung out of the earth”; that is, because Christ has been born in the flesh? Moreover “He Himself is our peace, he it is who has made both one” (Ephesians 2:14) so that we might become men of good will, bound together by the pleasing fetters of unity. Let us rejoice, then, in this grace so that our glory may be the testimony of our conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12) wherein we glory not in ourselves but in the Lord. Hence the Psalmist has said: “My glory and the lifter up of my head” (Psalm 3:4). For what greater grace of God could have shone upon us than that, having an only-begotten Son, God should make Him the Son of Man, and thus, in turn, make the son of man the Son of God? Examine it as a benefit, as an inducement, as a token of justice, and see whether you find anything but a gratuitous gift of God.