

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday December 10, 2006

Fifty years ago today, C. S. Lewis wrote in a letter: "Insofar as the things unseen are manifested by the things seen, one might from one point of view, call the whole material universe an allegory." This was very much in the spirit of his greatest mentor in the spirit: George MacDonald, who was born on this day in 1824. Let us pray.

Lord:

We read of a baby, cradled in the straw of a stable in Bethlehem – a real baby in a real place in real time. Had we been there, we'd have smelled the smells of the stable and heard his cries and kissed his little fingers – and missed what was happening. Now we know that something yet more real was happening there on that day in that everyday scene, and it was born in the deepest Heart of Eternal Love. And we read of a man, crucified on a cross at Golgotha – a real man at a real place in real time. Had we been there, we'd have seen the blood and heard his cries and clenched our fists – and missed what was happening. Now we know that something yet more real was happening there in that everyday scene, and it was being borne in the deepest Heart of Eternal Love.

O, Emmanuel, we're amazed as we bow before You: Cosmic Creator asleep in a cradle, Savior of the world in torment on a cross. The straw in the stable was real stuff; the cross was real suffering. You made the grass for the manger that bore You, a virgin's newborn, and the tree that bore You, God's Lamb. Our flesh and blood is real stuff, too, the same as Yours, designed by You for us and You. But Your flesh was torn, Your life's blood spilled – for us. And in Your shed blood, You give us life. And behind it all is Mercy's Mystery yet more real.

As we prepare our hearts and minds in another season of Advent and Christmas, as we hear again the Glad Tidings of Great Joy which shall be to all people, may we catch the meaning as never before. May we know that it all means so much more than meets the eye. Enlighten those who don't yet know what it means. And give us who think we do know, a love for You that looks forward to yet unimagined depths with You, Emmanuel.

Thank You for always hearing us, as now we pray the words You taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.