

Worthless Yet Worthy – December 2016

Yesterday morning I heard the carol “*O Holy Night*.” I’ve heard the song all my life and can usually remember most of the lyrics, but a particular line in the first verse unexpectedly caught my attention.

*O Holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Til He appeared **and the soul felt its worth.***

Why did the author of the carol, a Frenchman named Placide Cappeau, feel that the birth of Christ caused the soul to feel its worth? Cappeau’s political views leaned toward socialism, which is evident in the last verse of the song:

*Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother.
And in His name all oppression shall cease.”*

These views may be why Cappeau wrote that the soul would feel its worth. Perhaps he felt that the coming of Christ would stir people up to the realization that they were valuable regardless of their circumstances, which could include poverty, slavery, etc. It just strikes me as odd that we would feel worthy at the coming of Christ, when His coming would seem to make us feel worthless. In comparison to the incomparable Christ our righteousness “*is as filthy rags.*” (Isaiah 64:6) Filthy rags are pretty worthless.

Another reminder of our worthlessness is found in the words of Jesus recorded in John 15:5-6: “*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”*

Yet we are worthy. We are made in the image of God. He created each of us to fellowship with Him; to relate to Him as our Father. But sin has made us worthless and deserving of punishment. However, even in our worthlessness, we still bear something of the image of God.

We know God loves us, and that love makes us worthy. So we are worthless, and yet we are worthy. Regardless of Cappeau’s intent in writing this lyric, the coming of Christ should make believers feel worthy, because His coming and the fulfillment of His mission to redeem us do make us worthy, even in our worthless estate. Confused? Of course; it is the great mystery of God’s love that he considers worthless sinners worthy enough to die for.

For what it’s worth (pun fully intended), our souls should feel worthy at Christmas. Because the Creator, the Great I Am, stooped low to make Himself one of us, to live and die for us, because He loved us. I cannot explain it; I can only accept it and be grateful for it. Thank you, Lord, for considering me worthy, and thank you, Lord, for sending Jesus.