**2017 12 25**

***“Thought for the Week”***

***“Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”***

On this glorious and magnificent Sunday we run to the church with joy, for Joy Himself has come into the world. We experience a peace in our hearts-a peace that is unshakeable-for Peace Himself has come to dwell deep within us. And finally we feel loved, as never before, because God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to us. Sadly beloved, many-even many of those who call ourselves Christians- do not experience this Joy, Peace, and Love at this time of the year. We are distracted by many other things and have forgotten the only thing that is needed. We have ignored heaven and attached ourselves firmly to this earth. Spiritual food and drink become, at best, a vague reality, while the real and only important reality lies in the material food and drink. So how do we, who belong to Christ, avoid this trap?

The answer is simple my beloved in Christ Jesus- draw near to our Lord Jesus in our minds and in our hearts. Indeed, He is near to us for He has taken on our flesh- He has become one of us. The One who created the heavens and the earth shares our joys and our sorrows. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His only desire is to make us equal to Himself! He wishes to share everything He has and is with us! He told us “All that I have is yours.” This is what it means to be an “heir of God.” We cannot do this on our own but only through His love. And as we come to know and experience this love, we will never again desire to be separated from Him. He is our Lover and we are His beloved. We will think about Him with every breath. We will be certain that He is always close to us and a part of us.

Finally, my dear ones, if we are to draw near to Christ in our minds and in our hearts, we must find and walk on the same path that He used to draw near to us. Our Lord “emptied” Himself, that is He humbled himself and was obedient. We also must humble ourselves and be obedient to God if we are to find this exquisite treasure He has laid up for us. There is no other way. We must take the focus off of ourselves, off of our own comfort and our own desires and put our focus on Him. As He emptied Himself- let us empty ourselves of all pride and strife. Let us humble ourselves before our fellow human beings, looking to do good to them at any and all costs. Let us run to the Church to pray to Him Who is constantly praying for us. Let our hearts burn within us as we pray, for the Love of God has been poured out into our hearts. Christ is born-Let us Glorify Him. Christ has come from the Heavens Let us receive Him. In this way, and only in this way will we experience the Joy, the Peace, and the Love that our gracious Lord so desires to give us. Amen.