The Incarnation as a Revelation of Divine Love
A Commentary on the Writings of St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom, one of the most prominent Church Fathers of the early Church, frequently reflected on the mystery of the Incarnation and its beauty as a representation of divine love. Through his homilies on the Gospels, contemplations on Pauline Epistles, and various letters, St. John emphasizes that the Incarnation is not merely an event but an intimate, mystical act of love—an act of love capable of transforming human nature. Christ took upon our nature to grant us everlasting salvation in His midst. He writes, "For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His Spirit; and so, He is bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit, that He may save me."

In St. John Chrysostom's **Homily 1 on the Gospel of John**, he focuses on the sudden transformation in the Christian life—from lost to saved, from sinner to forgiven. To explain this concept, he focuses on the story of the thief on the cross. He writes, "Tell me what is worse than a robber and a murderer, is not this the extremist kind of wickedness? Yet such a one arrived straight at the summit of excellence, and passed into Paradise itself, not needing days, nor half a day, but one little moment. So that a man may change suddenly and become gold instead of clay." This example reveals the transformative power of divine love granted to us through the incarnation—how even a sinner at the point of death can, in a single moment, experience salvation.

Yet, it is important to realize that *despite* the divine love and the gift of the Incarnation, we must still be active participants in seeking salvation. Although our Lord has opened the doors of paradise, we must still earnestly desire to be with him. To emphasize this point, St. John Chrysostom uses the comparison of a merchant. He writes, "The merchant too wishes to get rich; but he does not allow his wish to stop with the thought of it; no, he fits out a ship, and gets together sailors, and engages a pilot, and furnishes the vessel with all other stores, and borrows money, and crosses the sea, and goes away into a strange land, and endures many dangers, and all the rest which they know who sail the sea. So too must we show our will; for we also sail a voyage, not from land to land, but from earth to heaven."

In **Homily 2 on the Gospel of Matthew,** St. John Chrysostom focuses on the humility of the eternal Son of God, who, though "Son of the Unoriginate God," willingly assumes the title of "Son of David" and takes on the nature of a servant. He then explains that "He suffered a slave to be father to Him, that He might make the Lord Father to you a slave." By taking upon our humanity and entering the world as a humble servant, Christ makes it possible for God, the Father, to become our Father in a humble, sacrificial, loving way. Rather than having a distant relationship with humanity, the Incarnation reveals God's sacrificial love for humanity.

For St. John Chrysostom, the Incarnation is the ultimate example of God's unconditional and eternal love. Through His humble birth, His life of service, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection, Christ reveals the depths of divine love and the possibility of complete spiritual transformation for all who respond to this love with active participation. The Incarnation shows us that God does not remain distant from humanity but enters its suffering and brokenness in order to heal and elevate it.

As we enter this time of Nativity, let us continue to contemplate the abundance of love we receive from our Heavenly Father and make a sincere effort to reciprocate that love to Him and those around us.

Sources:
- Bible, English Standard Version
- Homily 1 on the Gospel of John
- Homily 2 on the Gospel of Matthew
- Homily on the Letter to the Galatians
- https://prydain.wordpress.com/2008/12/25/st-john-chrysostom-homily-on-christmas-morning-3/