

# Sermon for The Third Sunday in Advent

**Date:** December 23, 2018

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 7:10-17

**Epistle Reading:** Romans 7:1-7

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 1:18-25



**Sermon Text:** Isaiah 7:10-17

**Sermon Title:** Prophecy – The Birth of the Messiah

## Hymns:

LSB 332 – Savior of the Nations, Come (v.1,3,7,8)

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (v.1,2)

LSB 361 – O Little Town of Bethlehem

LSB 338 – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

LSB 358 – From Heaven Above to Earth I Come (v.1,15)

LSB 398 – Hail to the Lord's Anointed

## Liturgy:

Divine Service: Prayer and Preaching



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin  
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN  
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



**Text: Isaiah 7:10-17**

The Lord spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the Lord your God for a sign. It can be from the deepest depths or the highest heights.”

But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask; I wouldn’t think of testing the Lord.”

“Listen now, descendants of David,” Isaiah said. “Isn’t it enough that you try the patience of mortals? Must you also try the patience of my God? 14 So the Lord himself will give you this sign: A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and she will name him Emmanuel [which means: God Is With Us].

He will eat cheese and honey when he knows how to reject evil and choose good. Indeed, before the boy knows how to reject evil and choose good, the land of the two kings who terrify you will be deserted.

The Lord will bring on you, your people, and your ancestor’s family a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah. He will bring the king of Assyria.”

**NOTE: Copyright** information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2018 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus who is Christ the Lord. Amen.

In today's Old Testament reading something strange occurs. Reading the whole thing in context clears things up a little bit. The context in which the Old Testament reading takes place is this. Ahaz was not a good king of Israel.<sup>1</sup> He often did many evil things, but for the sake of the people, and the promise God had made, God spared Ahaz' kingdom from destruction.

What happens right before Isaiah speaks this prophesy is that two kings come together to take Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The people and the king are frightened for their lives. They know very well if the walls are breached no one lives. The army against them is far far superior to their own. Everyone knows it is only a matter of time. Nothing will stop the attack and their destruction.

Then God speaks to the prophet Isaiah. He tells Isaiah to go to a certain place where he will meet king Ahaz.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah is instructed to tell Ahaz, "Do not fear. God will fight on your side. The kings that have come against you will be destroyed." It is in fact recorded that within 65 years those enemies were shattered.

However at the time Ahaz was not so sure he could believe God's Word. He did not believe that God's Word was, just that, God's Word. Because he doubted Isaiah said, "Ask for a sign. Anything at all.<sup>4</sup> What test will you place before God so that you will know that He alone is God?"



Well Ahaz was a spiritual man, but more superstitious than faithful. The kind of man that would chase every and any new fad that came along so long as it provided him something he wanted. Yet even this corrupt man knew you do not put God to the test. What he failed to understand is that when God tells you to do something you should. He refused.<sup>5</sup> He says, "I will not put God to the test."



In anger God tell Isaiah to say, "Then I will give you a sign!" But not a sign that Ahaz could understand. That was on purpose. Ahaz was judged that day. God chose to withhold His grace from Ahaz. The prophesy given was for God's people far in the future. To a people who would live hundreds of years later. The prophesy of a child, born to a virgin, who would save the whole world from sin.<sup>6</sup> In other words save the whole world from the mess that it has become. He will restore us, and all of creation, to everything God had intended for us from the beginning.<sup>7</sup> This would be done through the child who would be born. This child would be Immanuel<sup>8</sup> – God With Us. That is what we read from the Old Testament.

1 1 Kings 16:30

2 Pekah king of Israel (at the time when Israel and Judah were divided into two kingdoms) joined forces with Rezin king of Syria & Aram and sought control of Judah. This account is described in both 2 Kings 16 and Isaiah 7.

3 Isaiah 7:3

4 Isaiah 7:10

5 Isaiah 7:12

6 Isaiah 7:13-14

7 Ephesians 1:4

8 'Immanuel' is a Hebrew word that means: "God With Us."

Then I read the Epistle<sup>9</sup> reading from Romans. Paul wrote the letter to the Christian congregations in Roman to help them deal with the many false teachings, misunderstandings and immoralities with which they were dealing.

In the section I read to you we find something a bit difficult to understand. It talks about how the Law applies to us while we are alive but not while we are dead.<sup>10</sup> That part is not so tough to grasp. However then it goes on to say that sin exists only because God's Law tells us what sin is.<sup>11</sup> Stated another way God's Law is what causes sin to exist. Without God's Law there could be no sin. It is God's Law that makes you a sinful person. If God had not given any rules there would be no rules to break and we would not be imperfect.

You see we are not living in "Plan B." God knew from the beginning, before He said "Let there be light<sup>12</sup>" that we would fall into sin. In fact, and this gets more difficult, God made the Law to make you sinful. Why? Why would God do that? Why did He make you sinful on purpose?

The answer is because He wants to show us how much He loves us. The reason is because He planned to die for us, to show us how much He loves us.<sup>13</sup> We are not living in a world where Gods plans were messed up. This world, this life, these problems that we all live through and deal with, they are God's plan. These things are not happening because God is not in control. These things are happening because God is in control.

Knowing that is what bring us to the question, "How does a life of trials and troubles, prepare us for a life where we will never know those things? How does a life in imperfection prepare us for a life of perfection?" The answer from God is, 'I am God.'<sup>14</sup> Sometimes He gives a bit more information. 'I am God. I know what you need. Trust Me. I am God.'<sup>15</sup>

That however is about all that God has said in answering those questions. He is preparing us for things we cannot understand or even imagine;<sup>16</sup> for wonders so profound they are in our sinful state, our fallen state, completely beyond our ability to grasp. They are too difficult for us, but not for Him. The world is not out of His control. He created a Law we could not obey so that He could come and fix what we broke.

That is precisely what was prophesied in Isaiah. The plan was already in action. The Messiah, the Savior, the Fixer of Problems, was already on the way; already in God's plan for us.<sup>17</sup> Part of that plan was revealed to Isaiah that day, and recorded for us, so that we would know that God is, as God has always been, God.<sup>18</sup>

You see that's the problem with churches that throw out some or parts of God's Word when it becomes inconvenient to them. When they start saying that society and culture determine what parts of the Bible are really God's Word, and which parts aren't. When churches start

9 'Epistle' is a Greek word that means: 'letter.'

10 Romans 7:1

11 Romans 7:7

12 Genesis 1:3

13 Ephesians 4:1

14 Exodus 20:3

15 Exodus 20:1-6

16 Revelation 21:19-21

17 Genesis 3:15

18 Genesis 1:1

saying things like, “Well that was just for those people in those days. We know more now. We know better now.” What they are really saying is that culture and conscience tells God what God says. Culture creates God as they want Him to be. Culture changes God to be whatever they determine they need Him to be. Such churches make God a creation of man, rather than man being the creation of God.

Paul here states profoundly that nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing! God’s Law was given by God for God’s purpose and plan in our lives, not only here but eternally. We understand the Law of God to do three things. Three things which are best pictured as: a Mirror, a Curb, and a Guide or Map.



- 1) The Mirror is what shows us that we are not living according to God’s Law. We are not perfect. It does in fact condemn us. That is not all it does however.
- 2) It also acts as a Curb, like the curb along the road that keeps you on the it. It prevents you from wandering off and crashing into the ditch or into people or buildings on the sidewalk.
- 3) Finally it acts as a Guide or a Map. It shows us the way home. It shows us the way to Heaven.

You see, and you need to understand this correctly, the Gospel is not the solution the Law is. The Gospel tells us how the Law was met. The Gospel tells us how the Law has been kept perfectly for us. The Gospel does not replace the Law.<sup>19</sup> The Gospel tells how the Law no longer crushes us, but now because of what Jesus has done saves us. You see if it is God’s Law that makes us sinful than it must be true that God’s Law is also what makes us perfect. The Gospel<sup>20</sup>, the Good News, is that the Law is fulfilled in Jesus so it no longer condemns us.

How did that happen? When did that happen? Who made it happen? Isaiah told us that One was to come who would do just that. Save us by fulfilling the Law. We would know He had come when a child was born of a virgin, and He would be Immanuel – God with us. God made the Law to crush us so that God could come and save us. In doing so He also showed us how much He loves us by the way He saved us; by enduring some of the worst that we, as a human race, could dish and out and saying, “Father forgive them.”<sup>21</sup>

The Gospel tells us who that is. I read it for you from Matthew chapter one. A young woman named Mary was chosen. Before she was married she became pregnant by the power of God. Joseph, her husband to be, was told by God to protect and care for her and the child who is God’s Son.<sup>22</sup> That message was brought to Mary and Joseph by the angel Gabriel. A great general of the Lord’s holy army, who serves in the throne room of the palace at New Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> An angel who serves continually in the presence of Almighty God.<sup>24</sup> This is the one whom God entrusted this very important messages. The message that His Son would be born.

19 Matthew 5:17-20

20 ‘Gospel’; is a Greek word that means: ‘Good News.’

21 Luke 23:34

22 Matthew 1:20-23

23 ‘New Jerusalem’ is a poetic name for Heaven.

24 Luke 1:19



That is what the Christmas season is about. The anticipation of the birth of the Son of God.<sup>25</sup> The one who made us perfect by the Law. He, Jesus, a name which means “God Saves,” did everything the Law required to be done. He did everything the Law states must be done. He did everything the Law requires. In doing so He opened the way for us to enter Heaven’s Gates with steadfast assurance, free of doubt or fear.<sup>26</sup> More than that to walk into the Great Hall of the Palace, to walk right up to the throne, and see the face of God.

The same face that Mary saw as she held Him in her arms. Christmas,<sup>27</sup> Christ’s Celebration, is just that a celebration of Jesus’ salvation for you.

Praise His holy Name.

Amen.

25 Luke 1:35

26 John 14:6; John 8:36

27 ‘Christmas’ is a Latin word that means “Celebration of the Christ.”