

Sermon for Advent Mid-Week #2

Date: December 11, 2019

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

Old Testament: Judges 13:2-7

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:5–11

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Sermon Text: Luke 1:26-38

Sermon Title: What Child is This?

Psalm: Psalm 27

Hymns:

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emanuel (v.1,4,7)

LSB 370 – What child is This

LSB 935 – Tell Out, My Soul, the Greatness of the Lord

LSB 336 – Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



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
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Luke 1:26–38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

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 { }

© 2020 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 the Prince of Peace. Amen.

It was an impossible situation. For forty years, Israel had suffered under the cruel Philistines looting their cities and ravaging their countryside. Severely oppressed Israel was in a dark and hopeless time. So often, though, dark and hopeless times give birth to renewed faith in God. God heard the Israelites' repentant cry and He answered. He did for them, what was humanly impossible: He rescued them from the Philistines.

God's rescue plan however did not begin with gathering an underground rebel army or smuggling weapons. His plan centered on one man. One man who would single-handedly rescue Israel without touching a weapon of war. More than that, God's rescue plan also started with circumstances no one was expecting: an angel speaking to a barren woman, the wife of Manoah. "Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son," the angel proclaimed. The Lord had done great things through the barren wombs of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, and He would yet again do great things through Hannah and Elizabeth. The wife of Manoah would join their ranks by bearing an important son. His name was Samson.

God's Spirit gave Samson incredible strength. He single-handedly accomplished jaw-dropping feats with the jaw of a donkey. It was the stuff of legend. Once, while in a vineyard, he was attacked by a vicious lion. Samson tore the lion to pieces with his bare hands. When the Philistines thought they had trapped Samson in Gaza, he went out at midnight, tore the city gates from the walls, and carried the gates on his back to the top of a hill.

His final feat was his greatest. Blinded, weakened, and mocked by his enemies, Samson was placed between two pillars in a large building where thousands of Philistines were worshiping their god Dagon. Samson pushed against the pillars. Even though it would cause his own death, Samson prayed that God would let him have strength once more to be able to pull the building down on all of those Philistines. Three thousand of Israel's enemies died through Samson's final act. God's Spirit did great things through Samson.

Samson's life was supposed to be distinguished not only by his single-handed feats of strength but also by his single-minded devotion to the Lord. Even before he was conceived, he was set apart to live as a Nazirite,

forbidden from eating anything unclean, drinking wine or any strong drink, and cutting his hair. He was to be different, to be holy, set apart for God's purposes. He was to live a life dedicated to the Lord. While Samson may have impressed people with his strength, he didn't impress anyone with his dedication to God; again and again, he failed to live up to his Nazirite calling.

In Holy Baptism, we have been called to be holy, set apart, to think, live, and act differently from the world around us. A world that opposes and denies God. God's Word says to us, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."¹ Are we? Do we hold ourselves to that higher standard, or are we like Samson. Would we, do we, impress anyone with our holiness. Do we let our daily devotions slide when the busy times come like Advent and Christmas, and Lent and Easter. Do we think and act for the benefit of others and their salvation or are we self-indulgent, seeking our own comforts and pleasures.

The truth is we've compromised and have too often blended in with the world around us so much they don't notice we're here. We are chameleons in the world, being much more devoted to our sports teams than to our Sovereign Savior and His Holy Church. We've been much more dedicated to our impulses and desires than to Immanuel. We've been much more committed to concoct our own creations of truth than to follow the way of Christ. Our dedication to living a holy life has not, and never could, impress God. We stand before Him guilty. We find ourselves, just like ancient Israel, in an impossible situation from which we cannot rescue ourselves.

Where we have abandoned God God has not, will not, abandon us. The Lord is more dedicated to you than you are to Him. He has done for you what you could never do yourself. In the fullness of time, at a time of great oppression, under the tyranny of sin, death and the power of the devil, the same God who acted through Samson acted for the world.

With single-minded devotion He rescued you from your sins and from the devil you chose to obey. He has single-handedly done what we did not, could not, ever do. He has rescued you by His plan. A plan laid down before the foundations of the earth were made. Rejoice and be at peace, "For nothing will be impossible with God."²

1 1 Peter 1:16

2 Luke 1:37

In the Gospel for today God does a wonderful thing. He speaks His Word through the angel Gabriel, to a faithful frightened virgin named Mary, and there conceives the greatest Deliverer. Scripture records: “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son.”³

Mary would bear not a sinful, imperfect, self-serving child like Samson, (or like you), but rather the sinless, perfect Holy Child – Jesus. No wonder Gabriel said, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... Of His kingdom there will be no end... The child to be born will be called holy.”⁴

What Child Is This? This Child is God in the flesh, God walking among us, this is Jesus the Holy Christ or God. This Child, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary⁵ was the Greater Samson. His life was truly set apart from the world. He did not waver from His calling and the purpose. Jesus’ greatness was not found in His single-handed feats of jaw-dropping strength. His greatness was in setting aside His divine and holy power to single-handedly do everything necessary for your salvation.

Satan is a roaring lion prowling about looking for someone to devour.⁶ Jesus had the power to meet that lion face to face and single-handedly rip him apart. Yet for your sake, He allowed Himself to fall to the jaws of Satan, and suffering God’s righteous judgment in your place. He could have wipe out a world of people who have sinned against Him. Instead, He willingly went to the Calvary to suffer death in your place.

We built walls and gates against Him with our words, thought, and deeds and He tore the gates of Hell off and carried them up a hill called Golgotha. He let Himself be blindfolded, beaten, and mocked so that He might stretch out His limp dying arms on a cross and let hell’s punishment do its worst to Him.

As if that wasn’t enough, the greatest act this Child ever did was to then rise from the dead on the third day. He single-handedly won the ultimate victory for you while bringing eternal judgment upon His foes.

3 Luke 1:31

4 Luke 1:32

5 Apostles’ Creed

6 1 Peter 5:8

From a new womb to a new tomb, this Child's whole life was dedicated to making you new—a new creation,⁷ filled with the same Holy Spirit⁸ that empowered Samson. The same Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary. You now can say with Mary, “Let it be to me, Lord, according to Your Word.”⁹”

When the Lord sends trials, we can say, “Let it be to me, Lord, according to Your Word.” If the cancer can't be cured we can say, “Let it be to me, Lord, according to Your Word.” No matter what the trial, in any impossible situations, in times of deep discouragement and despair, we can still say, “Let it be to me, Lord, according to Your Word.” For our Lord is great. His mercy is great. His victory is great.

What Child is this? This is Messiah who has come, and His name is Jesus, the Great Deliverer.

Amen.

7 2 Corinthians 5:17
8 1 Corinthians 6:19
9 Luke 1:38