

Sermon for Christmas Eve

Date: December 24 (6:30)pm, 2020

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

First Testament: Luke 1:5-13, 16, 59-79

Second Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Third Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Fourth Reading: Luke 2:8-12

Fifth Reading: Luke 2:13-14

Sixth Reading: Matthew 2:1-11



Sermon Title: Jesus: The Son of Mary

Hymns:

- LSB 376 – Once in Royal David's City
- LSB 371 – Let our Gladness Banish Sadness
- LSB 344 – On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cry
- LSB 374 – Gentle Mary Laid Her Child
- LSB 358 – From Heaven Above to Earth I Come
- LSB 369 – Where Shepherds Lately Knelt
- LSB 380 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- LSB 370 – What Child is This
- LSB 363 – Silent Night, Holy Night

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Matthew 1:16

...and Jacob,
the father of Joseph,
the husband of **Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.**

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Peace to you from the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Holy Christ of God. Amen.

Matthew 1:16 records the end of the genealogy of Jesus with these words:

... Jacob [*was*] the father of Joseph
the husband of Mary,
of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

The birth of Jesus to Mary doesn't make sense. He was expected to be born in King David's royal city of Bethlehem. A pregnant girl in Nazareth couldn't seem right. One would expect the one called Lord by King David to be born in a palace, not in a stable. He should have been wrapped in the finest of fabrics, like silk or cotton, not swaddled in rags. Perhaps the most shocking part of the angels' birth announcement to the shepherds was, they would find the Savior, Christ the Lord, lying in an animals' feeding trough. None of it made sense, right down to a young, unmarried girl giving birth to the promised Messiah.

Mary understood God does not operate the way the world does. From the time that the angel Gabriel appeared to her, she learned how differently God would be at work. While she wondered how she, a virgin, could bear the Son of the Most High, her response was:

I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to your word.¹

Her barren cousin Elizabeth also conceived in a way that seemed unimaginable, but nothing is impossible for God.

When Mary went to visit her cousin, her song was one of praise to the God who does the impossible. He is the God who brings down the mighty and exalts the humble, who fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty, and for whose sake all generations will call this humble servant Mary, blessed.

On account of our sin we too are the humble and hungry, the lowly. We are spiritually poor in heart, without any possible hope to reverse our fortunes. Since we cannot restore things on our own, we need someone to come and save us. That was God's plan from the very beginning.

God spoke words of promise as he banished Adam and Eve from Eden, promising that one of their own Descendants would crush the serpent's head. The Old Testament is full of signs pointing us forward to the fulfillment of that promise. From Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Judah and Tamar, Rahab and Ruth, David and Bathsheba, Joseph and Mary, we see God at work, weaving His plan of

1 Luke 1:38

salvation through each generation, right up until the Holy Spirit came to Mary, so that she would become pregnant with the long-promised Messiah. It may not make sense to the world, but God does not operate the way the world does.

While Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He still was born of the Virgin Mary, and so, according to His human nature, He ate and drank, wept and slept, felt emotions and physical pain, like all of us. Jesus had to be conceived by the Holy Spirit to be of the same substance with the Father, to be truly God, without sin, perfect and holy in every way.

He also had to be born of Mary. He had to be flesh and blood, truly human in fulfillment of the promise that “the virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”² He was born covered in blood, and he would die covered in blood. The way that He would save His people from their sins was by shedding His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins. He came to redeem us, to buy us back for God. Not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood. Jesus had to be fully God, but He also had to be fully man, so that He could shed that blood on the cross for us.

It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense that the Son of God would get up from the table and, with a towel and basin, wash His disciples' feet. It doesn't make sense that the Holy One of Israel would associate with an adulterous Samaritan woman, or heal the Roman centurion's servant. It doesn't make sense that this descendant of David and Abraham would associate with tax collectors and prostitutes. Most of all, it does not make sense that the Son of God would come to die, but that is just the kind of Lord He is.

It is in His wounds that we find healing. It is in His taking on our shame that we are made righteous. It is in His being forsaken that we are restored. It is in His death that we live. How truly backward it all seems. It should really come as no shock at all, that God's way are so very foreign to sinners.

The resurrection did not make sense either. Everyone expected that Jesus' body would be found in the tomb. The fact that the stone was rolled away, and His body missing prompted them to think it must have been the work of the gardener, or else some enemy like the Pharisees. Once again, God's design doesn't make sense to us. Just like Jesus' genealogy.

His genealogy shows us that while the family of Jesus was fraught with mistakes and misdeeds, the promised Descendant would be perfect in every way. In fact, though Jesus' family was marred by sin, God's plan of salvation was perfect. Christ exchanged His holiness for our sin, and His death for our life. Death could

2 Isaiah 7:14

not hold Jesus, so in the resurrection on the Last Day, we will see with our own eyes our Redeemer, who lives.³

What it means for you is that God still doesn't work the way that the world does. God still turns the world upside down, and doesn't operate the way the world expects. The almighty God became a tiny baby, knit together in Mary's womb. The King of kings and Lord of lords was born to an unknown peasant girl with a questionable lineage. He still comes to us today through His Word, attached to the ordinary elements of water, and bread and wine. His power is still made perfect in our weakness. What we deserve for our actions is death, but He has given us the free gift of life eternal. We, the lowly, are exalted, by God humbling His Son.

Nothing about this makes sense. Luther wrote:

[God] turns the world with all its wisdom and power into foolishness and gives us another wisdom and power.⁴

A virgin found to be with child. A Savior wrapped in swaddling cloths. A King lying in a manger. Peace on earth in infant form. Good news for all the world announced to shepherds. It is all upside-down, but it all comes together as God's plan, and His fulfillment of His promises.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, shows us this very thing, with every name and generation. God's ways are certainly not our ways, but He has remained faithful to all of His promises given to all the saints of old. The list of names serves as a beautiful reminder that Jesus Christ came for all people. The genealogy of Jesus isn't a fairy tale or a pixy story. It is a reality, full of sinners and scandal. All are people for whom Jesus died: David and Abraham, Joseph and Mary, you and me.

This holy Child is the Holy Christ of God, our Savior. This Child is our Champion taking the field of battle to wage war on our greatest enemies: Sin, Death, and Satan. Christmas is about the one true holy war, waged by God Himself on all those who would try to harm His children.

Jesus turns the world upside-down. In doing so He turns you a miserable sinner, into a member of the house of God. Praise His Holy Name. The name of Jesus. Amen.

3 Job 19:25-26

4 AE 21:314



**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**