

His Name is Wonderful

Advent Midweek #2 – 12/10/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Judges 13:1-24 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 18-19, [Literal translation from the Hebrew,] **“And The Messenger of Yahweh said to [Manoah], ‘Why do you ask My name, seeing that it is absolutely and supremely wonderful?’ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to Yahweh...”**

Introduction

- ✧ It's a recurring theme for God's Old Testament people, especially in the Book of Judges. The Israelites get lazy in their faith and turn their backs on the Lord; running after other gods; thinking that somehow they will get more of what they want from those manmade idols.
 - ➔ Then, God's anger is roused against them so that He allows them to receive the consequences of their unbelief and they are overrun by their enemies. Once they finally come to see the error of their ways, they then cry out to Yahweh for help.
 - ➔ It's then that Yahweh raises up a judge; that is a deliverer, to rescue them; to free them from the power and oppression of their enemies. After that the land has a period of rest, and everything goes well, that is, until the judge dies and he/she is no longer around to keep their focus on Yahweh. And what happens next? The people become spiritually complacent and apathetic again. They turn away from Yahweh and the whole process starts all over again.
- ✧ That's where things are at in the cycle at the time of our text; the story of the birth of Samson. Times are not good; Israel has wandered ... again. But this story of Samson's birth gives you and me today the Advent reminder that even though we too are wayward children, God not only disciplines us, but He sends someone to rescue us from our enemies and bring us back into His fatherly embrace.
 - ➔ And He accomplishes all of this through the Angel – or the Messenger of Yahweh. In fact, it turns out that this Angel of Yahweh both sends and then is the Deliverer who rescues God's wayward children.
 - ➔ So let's direct our attention for a few moments to this Angel – this Messenger of Yahweh and how the events here in Judges 13 point us to the ultimate event of His own coming ... at Christmas!

I. Angel of Yahweh sends Israel a deliverer - Samson.

- ✧ As I said before, times are not good for the children of Israel. Once again they have done evil in the sight of Yahweh, and so, He has allowed them to be taken by and now controlled by the Philistines for 40 years.
 - ➔ If we're honest, we can see ourselves in the children of Israel, can't we? Far too often, it's when everything is going well, that we become lazy and complacent in our faith; that we forget about or at least place the Lord behind the things of this world in our priority scale. So, when are primary focus becomes our own desires, it's then that God often allows trouble or hardship to come upon us. Why? so that we might come to see what we've done. He works repentance in our hearts so that we will turn back to Him in faith and call upon His name; so that once again, He becomes our first and greatest priority.
- ✧ So, as promised, God works even the bad things in our lives for our good. Sometimes He uses the consequences of our sin; the events in our lives to bring the judgment of His Law upon us in order that we might be brought to see how much we truly need the Gospel of Jesus, our Savior.

➔ The Old Testament often shows God working repentance within His people with His left hand; His Law hand, so that with His Gospel, right hand He might pour out His eternal blessings of forgiveness and life upon us. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, “My son, do not despise Yahweh’s discipline or be weary of His reproof, for Yahweh reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”

- ✘ And that’s where Israel, well, at least some of the penitent Israelites, are at in tonight’s text. The Messenger of Yahweh comes to Manoah and his wife. To this point, her womb has been “closed”; unable to bear children. But the Messenger of Yahweh now seeks her out and declares, “You shall conceive and bear a son ... he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (v. 5). Yes, only through the miraculous work of God, her womb will be opened and she will give birth to a son. And not just any son; hers will become Yahweh’s next judge; the champion of God’s people.
- ✘ Okay, I’ve been kind of skirting around the issue, so we need to clarify something that is crucially important here. This Angel of the LORD, or as I’ve been calling Him, the Messenger of Yahweh, is not any ordinary created being, not even an angel that God created on one of those first six days, like the angel Gabriel or the angel Michael or that multitude of the heavenly host that will sing on Jesus’ birthday to those shepherds “out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Lk. 2:8).

➔ No, this is the One that the Hebrew calls the “מלאך־יהוה” (Malek Yahweh). “Malek” is Hebrew for “angel” which literally means “messenger” or “word-bearer”. But when He shows up in the Old Testament as He is in this text, this is a manifestation the one divine Being. As the “Messenger of Yahweh” it would be appropriate even to translate it as the “Word” of Yahweh, as John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

➔ So, do you get who this Messenger of Yahweh is here? He is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit; the Son of God before He was born among us and became man. This is the One that all of those created angels will sing about on the first Christmas! How awesome to think that here the Son of God comes down to man to announce a miraculous birth through which God the Father will work to deliver His people; much as centuries later, that same Son of God Himself would be miraculously born to bring the ultimate, eternal deliverance to God’s people of all time.

- ✘ So, Jesus, before His earthly birth into human flesh, comes to His people in advance of His own coming to deliver the promise that a deliverer for Israel, is coming from God. You and I know him as Samson. But notice how the Son reveals Himself, already as the one who will come Himself to deliver us all.

II. Messenger of Yahweh Himself delivers us from sin.

- ✘ First of all, notice how Manoah’s wife believes the Word she receives as if it is from Yahweh Himself, much like the way that Mary believed when she was told that she would give birth to the Messiah. Both of those women had plenty of earthly reasons to question God’s message. One had been unable to conceive for years and years. The other was a virgin. And yet they both had received the faith needed to accept the message, as Mary said, “Let it be to me according to your Word” (Lk. 1:38).

➔ Then, beginning in verse 11 of tonight’s text the Messenger of Yahweh appeared to Manoah himself, just as God also came to Joseph after he found out that Mary was pregnant. God spoke to Joseph in a dream to confirm that what was conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit. So tonight we see how the Son of God comes to Manoah to confirm for him the truth of what his wife had said and how their son should be raised.

✘ To that point, Manoah's wife was told, before he was conceived, that Samson was to be raised as a Nazirite. The name "Nazirite" means "set apart" or "dedicated" to Yahweh. Part of that dedication meant that a Nazirite would never drink wine and never cut his hair. But the primary point of being a Nazirite was that you were separated out from the people as one who would devote your entire life to the LORD's work.

➔ Hmmm. Isn't that a perfect description of Jesus? He too was set apart by the heavenly Father from before His conception; dedicated for the work of redeeming His people from their sin and delivering them from the power of the devil. The Word of the Lord came to Mary: "the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). Jesus, true God and true man, was and is indeed holy; set apart; set apart so that He might make us holy!

✘ Manoah asked the Messenger of Yahweh to stay so that he might prepare a goat for Him to eat. Clearly Manoah had not yet fully grasped who this was that was standing before him. So how did this pre-incarnate Jesus respond? He said that he would not eat Manoah's food – after all, He had no physical body at that point. But instead He directed Manoah to offer a burnt offering to Yahweh. This prompts Manoah to ask Him, "What is your name, so that, when Your words come true, we may honor You?" (v. 17). And the Son of God answers, "Why do you ask My name, seeing that it is absolutely and supremely wonderful?" (v. 18).

➔ That's what the Hebrew word that Jesus used is more accurately saying. The word is "פִּלְאִי" (pīlê) and means so much more than just "wonderful". To begin with this Hebrew word is only used in the Bible as a descriptor for God alone as well as carrying the meaning of "incomprehensible" in the absolute sense. It is a word that should never be toned down. So the Son of God asks Manoah something like this, "Why do you ask My name, since you can see that it is absolutely and supremely wonderful to the point of being utterly incomprehensible" for you as a human to grasp how wonderful it really is.

➔ Jesus' name, you see, like His countenance, was and is awesome and beyond human comprehension to this day. His is the name that is above every name, a name that was not yet to be revealed at the time of our text, but would later be made known as Jesus, the one who saves His people from their sins. Isaiah 9:6 even prophesied to that fact saying, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

✘ Well, Manoah did offer a sacrifice to Yahweh. And then the One whose name is so Wonderful did an utterly incomprehensible thing. He ascended in the flame of the sacrifice on the altar out of their sight!

➔ This actually points us to the purpose of Christ's coming and His birth. He descends to earth as one of us so that He could then offer Himself up in sacrifice to pay for our sin and guilt. He came to be our Deliverer; the Savior to His people so that through His sacrifice we might also arise with Him to a new and everlasting life.

✘ Now remember, Samson, the child of Manoah and his wife, served as a small pre-figuring of Jesus as it was through his death that he won his greatest victory over the Philistines. After being captured and bound to the pillars of the building, by his great strength, he caused it to collapse on himself and all the Philistines who were gathered around him. So also Christ won the ultimate victory over our enemies – sin, Satan and the grave, through His mortal sacrifice.

✘ When the Messenger of Yahweh ascended in the flame, Manoah and his wife finally discerned who had been in their presence. Manoah said in verse 22, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." They knew full well the depth of their sin; that they – like all of us, do not deserve to survive in the presence of the one perfect and holy God. But as our Gospel Reading in John

3:17 says, "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him."

➔ Jesus came at Bethlehem for that very purpose; so that sinful man would be able to stand before God and live. That's the message of Christmas, my friends. Jesus, being both God and man, came to be the bridge; to restore God and man back together. In Him, our broken relationship is repaired and now we have the privilege and joy of seeing and living with God forever.

- ✂ Let us, then, during this Advent season, understand that Jesus is our greater Samson. As our Deliverer and Savior, His name, though it is incomprehensible for us to fully grasp, it is absolutely and supremely and truly "Wonderful" in every way. To Him be the glory! Amen.