

Jesus: Son of Mary

Christmas Eve/Day – 12/24-25/20 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Matthew 1:1, 16

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ...And Jacob [was] the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.”

Introduction

- ✘ As we have explored the genealogy of Jesus recorded at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew during our Advent Midweek sermons this year, we have clearly found out that there is nothing clean about the list of our Savior’s ancestors.
 - ➔ Not only are there unexpected – even scandalous people included – but there are also people who are left out. Matthew’s count of the number of generations doesn’t quite add up.
 - ➔ So did Matthew leave things out intentionally? Could he just not count? I hope not, considering he was a tax collector. Maybe he simply was not as good of a historian as Luke?

I. God’s way of sending the Messiah vs. the World’s way

- ✘ Or maybe this shouldn’t be a surprise to any of us, when you consider that almost everything about Jesus’ birth to Mary doesn’t fit with what our world would call common sense or the “regular” way of things taking place.
 - ➔ For example, since the Old Testament prophecy said that Jesus was expected to be born in King David’s royal city of Bethlehem, a pregnant girl 90 miles away in Nazareth couldn’t be right, could it?
 - ➔ Instead you would expect the one whom King David called “Lord” to be born in a palace, not in a stable. He should have been wrapped in the finest of fabrics, such as silk or cotton rather than simple swaddling cloths.
 - ➔ But perhaps the most shocking part of the angels’ birth announcement to the shepherds, that we heard earlier in our Gospel Reading, was the fact that they would find “a Savior who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11) lying in an animals’ food trough.
- ✘ None of these things made sense at all, right down to a young, unmarried, teenage girl giving birth to the promised Messiah.
 - ➔ Yet Mary, in faith, understood that God does not operate the way the world operates. From the time the angel Gabriel appeared to her, she quickly learned how differently God would be at work in all of this.
 - ➔ Even while she wondered how she, a virgin, could ever bear the Son of the Most High, her response was this, “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). Add to that the fact that her supposedly barren cousin Elizabeth had also conceived in a way that seemed inconceivable to the human mind (pun intended of course), and we see that Gabriel’s declaration was the one thing that seemed to make the most sense of all. He said, “Nothing will be impossible for God” (Lk. 1:37).

II. God works through and exalts the lowly

- ✘ So Mary went to visit Elizabeth. And the song she sang upon her arrival (Lk. 1:46-55), known today as the Magnificat, is one that praises God for regularly doing the impossible.
 - ➔ Yes, God's normal "M.O." in Scripture is that He reverses things from the expected to the unexpected; from the possible to the impossible. After all He is God! He brings down the mighty and lifts up the humble. He fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty.
 - ➔ So, Mary rejoices in Luke 1:48, saying that God "has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me (Mary) blessed". Martin Luther wrote of Mary's song: "When the holy virgin experienced what great things God was working in her despite her insignificance, lowliness, poverty, and inferiority, the Holy Spirit taught her this deep insight and wisdom, that God is the kind of Lord who does nothing but exalt those of low degree and put down the mighty from their thrones, in short, break what is whole and make whole what is broken" (AE 21:299).
- ✘ Well guess what dear friends, on account of our sin, we, too, are the humble and hungry; the lowly. In spiritual things, we are impoverished without any possible hope of reversing our fortunes. And since we cannot restore things on our own, we desperately need someone – someone to come and save us.
 - ➔ Thankfully that was God's plan from the very beginning. He promised Adam and Eve as He banished them from the garden that one of their own descendants would crush Satan, the old serpent's head on their behalf.
 - ➔ Yes, the entire Old Testament is full of signs that point 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 how God has worked the whole time, weaving His glorious plan of salvation through each subsequent generation, right up until the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, as Gabriel promised, so that she would become pregnant with the long-promised Messiah.
- ✘ It may not make sense to the world, but of course, God is not controlled by or obligated to operate as the world says He should. So many people still forget who is God, and who is not.

III. The Son of God humbled Himself to become Son of Mary

- ✘ And in God's perfect wisdom, our salvation from sin required that human flesh must die to make things right. So, Jesus, God's Son was conceived by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a lowly human being. Once He was born of the Virgin Mary, then according to His human nature, He ate and drank, wept and slept, felt emotions and physical pain, like all other human beings.
 - ➔ Jesus had to be conceived by the Holy Spirit in order to remain of the same substance with the Father; to be truly God; without sin; perfect and holy in every way.
 - ➔ But He also had to be born of Mary. He had to be flesh and blood; truly human in fulfillment of the promise in our Old Testament Reading tonight, that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Is. 7:14).
- ✘ Yes, Jesus was born covered in blood and He would die covered in blood because as Hebrews 9:22 says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins".
 - ➔ So He came here to earth, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger to redeem us; to buy us back from sin and death for God. "Not with perishable things such as silver or gold," 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "but with the precious blood of Christ".
- ✘ Jesus had to be fully, 100% God, but He also had to be fully, 100% human, so that He could shed innocent human blood on the cross for us; for the forgiveness of our sins.

- ⊗ So many things in His life could never make sense to our worldly; sin-contaminated way of thinking.
 - It made no sense that the Son of God would get up from the table and, with a towel and basin, wash His disciples' feet. It made no sense that the Holy One of Israel would associate with an adulterous Samaritan woman or heal the Roman centurion's servant. It made no sense that this descendant of David and Abraham would associate with tax collectors and prostitutes.
 - And most of all, it made no sense that the Son of God, who never committed even one sin, would come – or even could come, to die. But that's just the kind of Lord He is.
- ⊗ The reversals abound. Now in His wounds we find healing. Because He took on our shame we are made righteous. By the Father forsaking His own Son on the cross, the Father now turns to us with open arms. And only in Jesus' death do you and I now have life. It all seems so backward on the surface, but it shouldn't, since we sinners are the ones looking at the ways of the only perfect God. Of course perfect wisdom is going to be foreign to us who are imperfect, right?
 - Obviously the resurrection doesn't make sense either. Everyone expected that Jesus' body would be found in the tomb. So on the third day, the fact that the stone was rolled away and Jesus' body was missing must have been the work of the gardener, or some enemy like the Pharisees. But once again, God's design doesn't have to make sense to us. The numbers don't have to add up.
- ⊗ Matthew's intention never was to list all the ancestors of Jesus. His genealogy shows us that even while the family history is fraught with mistakes and misdeeds, God is still able to bring the promised descendant through their imperfections. Out of sinful humans, the One who comes is perfect in every way.
 - Yes, God's entire salvation plan is to bring perfection out of that which is marred by sin. Christ exchanged His holiness for our sin; His death for our life. And just as death could not hold Jesus, so in the resurrection on the Last Day, you and I will be raised from death to new life, to see our Redeemer with our very own eyes.

IV. By humbling His Son, God exalts us

- ⊗ So moving forward from this Christmas in faith what should you and I expect from God? If you expect Him to work in ways that will make perfect sense to your family or friends; to your world around you, I'll just tell you right now, you are going to miss out on God's amazing work.
 - Because just as He promised, He is still coming to us today through His Word; attached to seemingly ordinary elements like water in baptism, and bread and wine in Holy Communion – but all with the power of grace and forgiveness and eternal salvation.
 - His power is still made perfect in our weakness. And even as our actions deserve death, He still gives us the free gift of eternal life. We who are lowly are miraculously exalted by God's humbling of His Son.
- ⊗ Luther wrote, “[God] turns the world with all its wisdom and power into foolishness and gives us another wisdom and power” (AE 21:314).
 - That, dear friends is the true beauty of Christmas: a virgin is found to be with child. A Savior is wrapped in swaddling cloths. A King is lying in a manger. Peace comes to earth in infant flesh and blood. Good news for the entire world is announced to lowly shepherds out in the field. And it all comes together as God's perfect plan; as His fulfillment of His promises of love.

Conclusion

- ⌘ This is the lesson of Jesus' genealogy in Matthew. With every name and every generation we see that God's ways are not our ways, nor the world's ways. Instead, our Lord has remained faithful to His own promises above all else, which reinforces the fact that we can trust Him and His Word in every way, every day!
 - ➔ What the world sees as just a list of names, we see as a beautiful reminder that Jesus' birth to Mary is so much more than just a fairy tale to be considered for 12 Days at the end of each year.
 - ➔ No, His birth to Mary is a daily reality show full of sinners and scandals; representing all people of all the earth; people for whom Jesus died; people like David and Abraham, Joseph and Mary, ...and you and me! In the name of our infant King, Jesus. Amen.