

Advent Vespers 3  
December 14, 2011

Matthew 1:18-23  
9-17-6-558, vv. 1, 5-7

“This Is How the Birth of Jesus Christ Came About”

- I. His conception is a miracle.
- II. His Person is a miracle.
- III. His work is a miracle.

Dear Christian friends,

There’s a saying that, “FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT.” We get used to something and soon enough take it FOR GRANTED. Let me use one example – **color TV**. My grandparents were the **first in the family** to have one. WHAT A THRILL it was to go to grandma and grandpa’s and watch color TV! Sure, we watched “The Lawrence Welk Show” – but it was IN COLOR! Now everybody has color TV. Now we take color TV FOR GRANTED. It’s NO BIG DEAL.

As we come to church for Christmas you will hear nothing new. It will be the SAME OLD STORY. **In fact every sermon** you hear here repeats the **same old message** – JESUS IS YOUR SAVIOR. But we don’t want that FAMILIARITY TO BREED contempt. Rather, may we ever marvel that **“this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.”** MARVEL WE SHOULD because 1)Jesus’ conception is a **miracle**, 2)Jesus’ person is a **miracle** and 3)Jesus’ work is a **miracle**.

**I. Jesus’ conception is a miracle.**

**“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.”** That’s what Joseph was trying to FIGURE OUT. **Christmas** was turning into a REAL NIGHTMARE for him. He and Mary were **“pledged to be married, but had not yet come together.”** Joseph and Mary had already exchanged their **wedding vows**. They had already promised each other their LIFELONG LOVE and **faithfulness**. But they hadn’t started living together as husband and wife. That might seem STRANGE to us today – but that was TYPICAL back then.

For the past three months Mary had been DOWN IN JUDEA visiting her relative Elizabeth. Now Mary’s BACK IN TOWN – and was Joseph ever in for a SURPRISE! Mary was pregnant!

Joseph was no dummy. He knew where babies come from. Joseph also knew that HE WASN’T the father of Mary’s baby. It was pretty obvious to Joseph that Mary had BEEN SLEEPING with some other man. His **dear Mary** was OBVIOUSLY no longer a virgin. Mary was OBVIOUSLY guilty of adultery and breaking the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment. People today may think it’s NO BIG DEAL to have sex before their married – to LIVE TOGETHER **without being** married – but GOD’S Word is **clear** and GOD’S will hasn’t changed any. Look up the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment in your catechism and read all the passages there. God’s Word establishes WHAT’S RIGHT and wrong – not what we see on TV or what other people are doing.

Joseph had two options for **handling** the situation. He could **“expose Mary to public disgrace”** – let everyone know that Mary had CHEATED on him. Or he could take advantage of Israel’s **lax divorce laws** and **“quietly” give Mary “a certificate of divorce”** and that would BE THE END of that. **“Because Joseph was a righteous man”** he chose the **second** option. Joseph was DEVASTATED but he was not out for **blood**. Joseph was not out to GET EVEN with Mary **for all the hurt** she had caused him. That’s NOT THE WAY God deals with us – that wasn’t the way Joseph was going to deal with Mary. **“Love covers over a multitude of sins,”** Peter tells us.

Finally Joseph was able to FALL ASLEEP that night. As he slept **“an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream”** and explained the SITUATION. Mary had not cheated on him. **In fact EVEN**

THOUGH Mary was pregnant – she was STILL a virgin. **“Joseph, don’t be afraid to take Mary your wife home, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”**

God’s Word clearly teaches that Jesus was “CONCEIVED by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.” This is the miracle of the **Virgin Birth**. Mary had not had sexual relations **with Joseph** or ANY OTHER man for that matter. Virgins don’t have babies but the VIRGIN MARY did. We can’t explain how EXCEPT to say it was a miracle. Or as Gabriel told Mary, **“nothing is impossible with God.”**

Why ALL THE FUSS about the virgin birth? **Because** this is a key part of Jesus being our Savior. If our Lord had been born in the NORMAL WAY **like you** and me He would also have been born with **original sin** and a **sinful nature** just like you and me. EVER SINCE the fall into sin all people are born sinful. Jesus bluntly told Nicodemus, **“Flesh gives birth to flesh.”** SINFUL PARENTS have sinful children. By this miracle of the virgin birth Jesus became a true man but WITHOUT the stain and corruption of original sin.

**“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.”** Jesus’ conception was a MARVELOUS **miracle**. But it really shouldn’t surprise us because WHO JESUS IS is also a miracle.

## II. Jesus’ person is a miracle.

**“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet”** Isaiah. There’s a lesson for us right there. When God makes a promise He ALWAYS KEEPS it. God never forgets – He **never goes back** on – His Word. We may HAVE TO WAIT a long time – but God ALWAYS comes through – and **always** at just the RIGHT TIME. Over 700 years had passed since God had **first given** His promise of **“Immanuel.”** For **700 years** the timing was just NOT RIGHT. But now **“the time had fully come!”**

**“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a Son.”** Jesus is a true human being. JUST LIKE **any other** baby the Baby Jesus needed His mother to **feed** – clothe – **change** and **cuddle** Him. JUST LIKE **any other** baby the Baby Jesus needed Joseph to protect and **provide** for Him. Look at Jesus’ LIFE HERE on earth. He ate – slept – hungered – **thirsted** – wept – got tired. Jesus experienced HUMAN LIFE – the pains – **frustrations** - **disappointments** – **hurts** – **rejections**, etc. The Virgin Mary gave birth to a **“son”** – a true human being.

**“And they will call Him Immanuel – which means, ‘God with us.’”** That cute little Babe of Bethlehem is NONE OTHER than the eternal Son of God – the second Person of the Holy Trinity. As we kneel at the manger and adore the Christ-child – UNDERSTAND that that little Baby is our God. MARVEL at the miracle of Jesus’ PERSON! This tiny Baby is He **“through whom all things were made.”** Mary’s “firstborn Son” is “GOD FROM GOD, LIGHT FROM LIGHT, TRUE GOD FROM TRUE GOD.” Mary’s Son – a **true HUMAN** being – is also TRUE GOD from all eternity. Jesus is God and man IN ONE PERSON – **100%** God and **100%** man.

You wouldn’t know that JUST BY LOOKING at Him. Jesus is a newborn baby yet He is ETERNAL – **without beginning** or end. Jesus looks so helpless lying there yet He is ALMIGHTY God. His birth is so lowly yet He is SO MAJESTIC.

MARVEL at who Mary’s Son is **because** He is a miracle. There’s just no way we CAN EXPLAIN how Jesus can **be true God** and **true man** at the same time. Marvel that **“this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about!”** But perhaps most marvelous of all is...

## III. Jesus’ work is a miracle.

***“She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”*** Jesus is not simply our TEACHER or ROLE MODEL. Above all else Jesus is our Savior. That’s what His name Jesus means – Savior.

Christmas came about as a MIRACLE of God’s **amazing grace**. MORE THAN ANYTHING else in the world a Savior is JUST WHAT we all needed. A Savior from sin. We **haven’t just made** some MISTAKES and BAD CHOICES in our lives. We’ve sinned – rebelled against our Creator. We’ve ignored and defied God’s **clear will** for our lives. We can easily jump all over the SEXUAL IMMORALITY of our day – teens not waiting until their married to have sexual relations – the acceptance of living together without marriage and of **homosexuality** – the pornography on the internet. That’s all sin – **no getting around** that. But SO TOO is cursing and swearing – **so too** is skipping church for no good reason or disobeying our parents – **so too** is lying – being greedy – SELFISH – LAZY – drinking too much, etc. **With sin** we are telling God to BUTT OUT of our lives – that He can’t tell us how to **live** or **act** or **talk** or **think**. That’s NOT JUST STUPID – it’s sin and it has its consequences. ***“The soul that sins, it shall die. Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”***

We are going to Bethlehem to see our Savior born. Then we will watch Jesus GROW UP and be the perfect child and **perfect adult** none of us ever were. We’ll watch Jesus live His WHOLE LIFE in perfect obedience to His heavenly Father’s will. We’ll even hear God the Father say, ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”***

We are going to Bethlehem – but we know that our trip will EVENTUALLY TAKE us to Calvary. In the trees of Christmas we also **need to see** THE TREE that became the cross. In the twinkling lights of Christmas we **also need to see** the SMOTHERING DARKNESS of Good Friday. The **Baby** Jesus was born to die the **death of the damned**. The Son of God took on our FLESH AND BLOOD so that He might shed that blood and sacrifice that life to ***“take away the sin of the world.”*** On the cross the innocent Jesus will be punished IN THE PLACE of us guilty sinners.

Yet even as we **get ready** for Christmas we are looking forward to Easter morning. Come Easter we’ll hear the angels proclaim more ***“good news”*** – ***“He is not here; He is risen, just as He said.”*** We’ll hear Jesus promise us, ***“Because I live, you shall live also.”***

That is WHY THE BIRTH of Jesus came about. ***“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”*** Trusting in this Babe of Bethlehem we have God’s complete forgiveness of all our sins and God’s promise of eternal life in heaven when we die.

***“This is how”*** and this is why – ***“the birth of Jesus Christ came about.”*** That’s what we’ll hear in **all** the different Christmas services. It won’t be ANYTHING NEW – but it will BE MARVELOUS to hear it all again. Marvelous – AND MIRACULOUS! Amen.

Hymn #6