

Christmas Eve (2022)

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- [0 : 00] She's never been married, and now we know why. I'm like, what? That ain't right. So I looked it up, not following that link, but looked it up, you know, with a careful server.
- And sure enough, it was just a lie. It's just spam. It's just... It's absurd. Not true. And that's how a lot of the world, in fact, our culture, thinks of the Christian faith.
- It's absurd. Really believe that? This ancient story, these things that are made up, these events that we don't see happening today.
- It's absurd. But I want us to take just a few minutes and consider what Scripture says. At Christmas, we celebrate Christ, the birth of Jesus.
- And I want us to ponder who he is and why he came. Advent, we've been celebrating Advent at Little Log, and they're the five candles, and most churches do four.
- [1 : 13] We do it the right way. We don't follow... In fact, we don't even follow the typical thing. But we have a white candle. Does anybody know what white stands for in the Gospels?
- Purity. And we just read that story, that the angel came to Mary and said, this will be a holy child. And that's why there's a virgin birth, to preserve the holiness of God in the flesh.
- And that's in Luke 1. In Matthew 2, there's another announcement. There's four announcements in the Gospels. And there's an announcement to Joseph. So Mary finds out.
- Joseph finds out. After he finds out she's pregnant. And the angel says to him, what? Don't fear to take Mary as your wife, or the child in hers of the Holy Spirit.
- And you shall call his name... Fred? Larry? Jesus. Names mean something in Scripture. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.
- [2 : 24] Joshua. Yehoshua. Because he will save his people from their sin. So a red candle for his salvation. We heard the second announcement in Luke, which is a third announcement to the shepherds.
- I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people. For unto you a Savior has been born today. So we made up pink for joy.
- I don't know if pink is a biblical color, but joy. And then there's a fourth announcement in Matthew 2.
- That's a gold one. Anybody have an idea what that one might relate to? Anybody bring gold to Jesus? Yeah, the wise guys. The Magi.
- There were more than three. There were probably 30. And they were kingmakers. They were imposing. In fact, when they came into town, Herod was shaking. Because they're going to make a new king.
- [3 : 31] And they came to worship him. And they brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Which God provided so that as Joseph and Mary and Jesus escaped to Egypt for a couple of years, they would have something to survive on.

The last announcement comes from the Old Testament, which is actually the first announcement. That's from Isaiah 9. And that one talks about the king coming.

And when he comes, he will be forever king. And that's not a future coming. He's already come, and he's already king. He's coming back.

But that's our advent. That's the announcements. When we heard the reading from Luke 1 and 2 here this evening, the name Mary was mentioned 11 times.

11 times. She's fairly significant in the story. Well, she's kind of central to this. She kind of couldn't do the story without her. But I want to just take a few moments and look at the perspective of Mary, the virgin.

[4 : 38] Who is she? How is it possible that she was a virgin that conceived? That's what the world would say is absurd.

And why does God send his son into the world in that manner? So who is Mary? A little background. What do we know about her?

Luke tells us that she lived in Nazareth of Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles. So she wasn't in the in crowd. She was in northern Israel, and the southerners looked down on the northerners.

And even one of Jesus' disciples said, can anything good come out of Nazareth? You see how it was looked on. She was a virgin. That's mentioned three times in chapter 1, which meant, as she said to the angel, she literally said, I have not known a man.

So it clarifies what she means by virgin. She was betrothed to Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter, we know. He was very poor. And the reason we know he was poor was because when he came to dedicate Jesus at the temple, he brought turtle doves, and turtle doves was an offering of the very poor.

[6 : 05] So they were poor. Not like TV preachers say, Jesus wasn't rich. He was quite poor. He was also from the house of David, which means that he was in line to be the Messiah.

Joseph could directly connect his lineage to King David. So could Mary, by the way, through different sons of David. So Jesus not only had a royal line through his adopted father, but had a physical line to the Messiah through his mother.

Betrothed. They were betrothed. That's not engaged. Engaged is different. Betrothed means it's a legally binding pledge, which would have required a divorce to break it off, which was Joseph's intent, right, when he found out she was pregnant, and the angels stopped him.

Christmas almost ended in divorce. She had a relative, we heard at the end of the story, named Elizabeth, who was quite old and barren and could not have children.

And there was good news that Elizabeth was already six months pregnant with little John. We call him John the Baptist. By the way, since Elizabeth was a relative of Mary, Mary, Jesus was a relative of John the Baptist.

[7 : 38] Mary also had a sister. Her name was Salome. She was the wife of Zebedee. That's a good, that's kind of a fun name to say, Zebedee. Should have named Zach Zebedee. I think I don't know. They had a number of sons, but the two most well-known ones were the James and John.

And so Mary's related to James and John, which means Jesus was related to James and John. See some connections going on in this story. Mary had four other sons after Jesus.

James, who wrote the book James. Joseph, Simon, and Jude, who also wrote a book of the Bible. She also had at least three daughters that we know.

So Mary was not a perpetual virgin, according to the scriptures. Mary was also a thinking woman, because it talks about how she thought through things.

She pondered, which means to reason through things. When the angel greeted her, she's thinking through, what does that mean? And then after all these people come and bring these gifts, Luke tells us that she's pondering and treasuring these things.

[8 : 50] And her heart's just thinking through all these things. So let's take a closer look at the story in Luke 1, the very first part that we read. The angel came to her, right?

Luke 1.26, sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you. Her initial reaction was troubled. She was troubled.

And perplexed. First, why am I favored? I live in Nazareth. I'm just a nobody.

Who am I? Why favored? What does that mean? So then he explains and he gives the revelation. He says to her, the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

[9 : 59] 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.

So he's the Messiah. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom will have no end. So he's not a temporary king. He's not like David, not like Solomon, not like Herod.

He's going to be an eternal king. And then she has another reaction. She says, How will this be? Since I have not known a man.

How can I conceive? She's thinking like we would. This is not possible. This is, this does not make sense. How is that possible?

And that's an important question because that's, the modern world would ask the same question. The world doesn't accept that. We reject that.

[11 : 02] We think that that's absurd to all human reason. The world scoffs at that. There's even Christians, Bible believing Christians, that don't hold to the virgin birth.

It's like, yeah, yeah. It's quite important though. So she asks, how is that possible? And the angel explains to her in verse 35, the angel answered and said, 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. And then he gives an explanation for nothing is impossible with God.

That's why. That's why you as a virgin will be pregnant. That's why Elizabeth in her advanced age, past childbearing age, kind of like someone else in scripture.

[12 : 16] Abraham had a wife, I think, that was, right? A miracle baby. But now, being a virgin, this is, God's kind of stepping it up a little bit.

Well, more impossible, not more impossible, humanly impossible. So it answers, he says, the presence of the Holy Spirit will overshadow, it's a really interesting word, he will cover over, he will be a covering.

And so, when you conceive that there's a protection there, there's a covering there, that protects the child from any taint of sin, so he will be holy.

Unlike any other child born. Every child's born with a sin nature. Right, moms? If you don't recognize that by age two or three, you ought to recognize that.

You do not have to teach a child to disobey. It comes natural. Right? I mean, moms, you don't teach them to do that, do they? They get that on their own.

[13 : 26] They're born now. They're born now. Jesus wasn't born that way. He wasn't born with that sin nature. So, this answers the physical question, how does a virgin conceive because God intervenes and he gives an example of Elizabeth and then states, for with God nothing's impossible.

It also answers the moral question, how is this child holy because the Holy Spirit purifies and protects from any inherited sin nature? So, the world will say this is all illogical, but to say it's illogical is not to take God into consideration.

That's a non-God consideration. It's only considering from a human point of view. Logic says God is sovereign and he's proved that. He's created the world. And the Bible says that everybody knows that.

No matter what you say, everybody knows that. You suppress it, maybe, you try to explain it away, you even convince yourself you don't believe that God created the world, but God has laid evidence everywhere.

And Romans 1 says, no one will have an excuse when they stand before him and go, I didn't see it. Yeah, you did. He is absolutely sovereign.

[14 : 48] He created the world. He created man from dirt. So it's not illogical that God can bypass natural order from time to time. It's what a miracle is from time to time.

It's quite rare. All of Jesus' humanity comes from Mary. And the Holy Spirit guards from inherent sin.

The virgin birth was no surprise because 700 years before the angel announced this to Mary, Isaiah the prophet foretold of this.

In Isaiah 7, the virgin will conceive and bear a son. And Matthew, the Jewish scholar, quotes that verse in Matthew 2 to prove its biblical creation.

God is creator of all. He certainly knows a bit more than our limited understanding. Most important at all, so I've asked some questions. Who's Mary? How is a virgin birth possible?

[15 : 55] That's easy to explain. The big question, probably the most important question, is why? Why did God do it this way? Why did it need to be a virgin birth? Why did he need to come into the world as a true human and holy?

Why is it crucial that we believe that God ordained that it would be a virgin birth?

One, because of who the child is, he's more than a son of man, he's the holy son of God, God himself taking on flesh. He would be the ruler of an eternal kingdom.

man, but he was fully God. And it's also because he had to be like us. This is the more crucial question, this is the more crucial consideration.

He had to be flesh and blood, he had to be fully human. He couldn't just be temporarily filled with the spirit kind of after his birth and before his death, which a lot of people kind of buy into.

[17 : 07] that still wouldn't have saved us. He had to be God all the way through. He had to be man all the way through, from conception to resurrection.

In fact, he stands in heaven with still a human body, by the way. He made that commitment. He was tempted without sin.

See, it was important for Christ to eventually go to the cross, not only holy, but to have been tempted and tried like we, to be tempted in every way yet without sin.

He had to prove, he had to earn righteousness for us, because we couldn't. We couldn't. Nobody could keep the law. Read the Old Testament, and nobody could keep it.

That's why Jesus came. The law is holy, righteous, and good, but it's bad news, because the law says guilty, because if you break one, you've broken them all.

[18 : 16] And to kind of rub it in, Jesus kind of said, you heard it was said, right? You heard it was said, don't murder. I say the same thing is what you yell at that car cutting you off.

Same thing, same motivation, same anger as murder. He's given the name Jesus.

Why? Because the angel told Joseph, you should call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their deaths, their problems, their human issues, right?

Did I get it right? the new version? He shall save his people from their sins. Sin's the issue. And the only way to save sinners, because we've all broken the law and none of us can keep the law, what's the greatest commandment?

You shall love the Lord your God with a little bit of your heart, throw in a little soul, try hard. Right? Is that what God said? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, which is your deep affections, and all your might.

[19 : 38] Check that one off. You good? It's impossible. We have moments, right? We have a time of worship where the soul's getting involved there.

we can't. None are able, because we're born in sin, so we already naturally are prone. We even fall in love with God, and yet the hymn writer says, we're prone to leave the God I love.

I'm prone now. That's natural. Faith is not natural. Righteousness is not natural. So we need a substitute sacrifice who's not an animal that is perfect on the outside, but we need a man who is holy on the inside, who's kept the law for us, and lays down his life in our place.

And that's not all. There's an exchange that goes on. He takes our sin, and then he's earned all this righteousness, and he gives us that righteousness before God. So before God, that's what we're called saints.

because before God, we're holy. Like Jacob put on Esau's robe, right, fooled his dad.

[20 : 57] Jesus gives us his robe not to fool our dad, but that's what the father looks at and says, yeah, I see that righteousness.

He pays our debt, cancels our guilt, takes away our shame, our unworthiness. It gives us righteousness. It's the most incredible thing. No human being can come up with this.

When we make religions and stuff, what do we come up with? Try harder, right? Be at peace. There's nothing wrong with those things, but it's all about us.

It's all on me. Jesus takes it all, and it's like, well, that's too good to be true. That's absurd. Well, unlike those ads that you could look at and find out, yeah, that's absurd.

It is just lying. I can look at this, and I can look at the testimony of hearts around here and see that the lives are changed. People are set free.

[22 : 03] Shame is gone. Our problems aren't gone. Our loans aren't paid. But the one that matters is, what's Mary's response to all this?

In verse 38, Mary said, behold, I am the servant of the Lord. It's a little bit more than, okay. No, it's behold, I am the servant of the Lord.

Let it be. And I want you to think about Mary. Remember, she's just this little girl from this nowhere place that, you know, known people.

She's just a nobody, and God lays this on her. She not only accepts it, she embraces it, she devotes herself to it, she entrusts her life.

By the way, what do people say about unwed moms? Or not unwed, she was a, she got wet and married, but child out of wedlock, you know, pregnant.

[23 : 19] People talk about that? People? So imagine in that society, okay, imagine in that society, very religious society, how people talk behind Mary's back.

She committed to that, too. she lived with that. Oh, I bet you heard it. Huh? And she said, I'm good.

You don't know who my son is, right? Hmm. She humbles herself under the mighty hand of God. So she responds, she accepts, she embraces, she devotes herself to it.

How about you? Where are you at? Do you believe? Do you accept? Yeah, I accept. Do you embrace it? Do you embrace it?

Do you humble yourself to that? Right? Do you we sing these beautiful songs, and I hope you sang it from your, not just your heart, but from your soul, with depth and passion?

[24 : 32] Which doesn't mean I have to be loud. Do you believe? Do you recognize your need? Do you recognize why it was so important for him to come for you?

For the Christian, he's everything. He's everything. I'm going to sing next, you are my all in all, so I think that kind of connects to that.

I think I'll pray at the end, so let's go ahead and do this. I'd like to invite you to stand.

If you can.