Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

One of the things that we learn as we grow up is the very important concept of promises. And the rule about promises is that they must be kept, right? I am sure you can all remember crying about a promise made to you that was not kept. Yes? But you can probably also remember someone saying to you, with hands on hips, “But you promised!” Yes? Promises must be kept.

Well, of all the promises that have ever been made, there is one promise that is more important than all the others by a country mile. And we looked at that promise in Article 17. Article 17 summarizes the time that God came to Adam after he had sinned and “comforted him with the promise that He would give him His Son, born of a woman, to crush the head of the serpent and to make man blessed.” So that was the first promise of God to send His Son as our Saviour.

And that promise was repeated throughout the OT.

* We read of it in **Genesis 26:4**, for example, where God said to Abraham that all of the nations of the earth would be blessed *through one of his descendants*.
* And earlier we read **Psa 132:11**, which speaks about God’s promise to David that *one of his descendants* would be the eternal king of God’s people.

And as the years and decades and centuries and millennia of the OT passed by, the question was *would* God keep this promise? And if so, *when* would it be fulfilled? *Who* would be the Promised Son of Eve and Abraham and David? And *how* could God’s Son be a descendant of Eve and Abraham and David?

Well, the opening part of Article 18 tells us that “God *has* fulfilled the promise He made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets.” And then the article points to our passage as explaining when and how God fulfilled the promise. So today we want to see **How the Birth of Jesus Fulfilled God’s Promise to Send Us the Saviour We Need**.

And we will see this as we think about the Lord Jesus as our **ordinary** Saviour and our **Extraordinary** Saviour.

But let’s begin with a bit of background.

* The author of what we read here is Luke. Do one of you boys and girls know what Luke did for a job? He was a **doctor**.And there is no one better qualified to talk about pregnancy thana doctor!
* And as we come to our passage, Doctor Luke has already told us about the pregnancy of **Elizabeth**, the wife of Zechariah. And Elizabeth’s pregnancy was a miracle because for many years she had been unable to have a baby and she and Zechariah were “*advanced in years*,” v7 says, which is a polite way of saying *very* old!
* But as we come to v26, Elizabeth is six months pregnant. That is what Luke was referring to when he said, “*In the sixth month*…”
* And the same angel, **Gabriel**, who appeared to Zechariah to tell him about his wife’s miraculous pregnancy, now appears to Mary to tell her about an even more miraculous pregnancy.
* And *Doctor* Luke is very specific in v27 that Mary was a **virgin**, which means that she had never had sexual intercourse. Many Bible scholars believe that Luke would have talked to Mary herself about all this. But even if he did not, he has checked and rechecked this information and he knows that it is 100% accurate. The angel came to her *at a time when she was a virgin*.
* And he said to her, “*You shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus,*” and then he continued with the incredible description of who Jesus would be and what He would do.
* And then we have Mary’s response in v34: “*How will this be, since I am a virgin*?” You see, Mary had passed her biology exams at school or she had been given THE talk at home, so she knew how babies were conceived. So while she believed Gabriel, she was not sure *how* this could be. And Gabriel replied, “*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*.”

So let’s use the rest of our time to see what these words reveal about the Lord Jesus, our ordinary and extraordinary Saviour.

1. Firstly then, the Lord Jesus, **our *Ordinary* Saviour**.

* 1. The last paragraph of our Belgic Article denies the heresy of the **Anabaptists**. And without going into too much detail, the Anabaptists were a group of people from the 16th century who wanted to reform the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) even more than Luther and Calvin did. And one of the major doctrines of the RCC was (and is) the worship of Mary as the mother of Jesus. So to counteract this idea, the Anabaptists taught that Jesus did not receive His human nature from Mary but was given a specially created human nature that was just implanted in Mary by God. So by viewing Mary as nothing more than a kind of surrogate mother, they felt that this helpfully undermined the attention that Rome gave to Mary. But there were two problems with this idea: first, it is not what the Bible teaches, as we shall see, and second, it just put the Anabaptists in a long line of heretics (which means teachers of false doctrine) who have taught that Jesus only *appeared* to be human but was not *truly* human. And we will see why that is false doctrine later in the sermon. But let’s first see how the Bible teaches that Jesus does have a *truly* human nature and that He received this nature *from Mary*, His mother.
     1. In **v31** Gabriel tells Mary that she will **conceive** a Son. And that word ‘conceive’ is the important word. In **v24**, we read that “*Elizabeth conceived*”; it’s the same word in the Greek. It is the same word that is used throughout the Bible to describe how a woman becomes pregnant – her egg is fertilized so that an embryo is formed. And it was the same with Jesus – an egg from Mary was fertilized and an embryo was formed. That is why **v42** describes Jesus as the fruit of Mary’s womb; Jesus truly was *of* or *from* Mary.
     2. And we can be certain that Jesus had an ordinary human nature from other parts of the Bible also. Some of them are mentioned in the second paragraph of our Belgic Article:
        1. We have already noted that God promised Eve and Abraham and David that one of their *descendants* would be the Saviour. So if Jesus had received a specially created human nature that was just implanted in Mary, then He would not be a descendant and the genealogies of Luke and Matthew would be a lie. **Romans 1:3** says that Jesus “was descended from David *according to the flesh*.” So Adam and Abraham and David truly were Jesus’ biological great, great, etc, grandfathers.
           1. For all sorts of different reasons it can be that a person does not know who his or her parents are. So these days you can get a **paternity test** done. And when you get the blood and DNA of a person that matches the blood and DNA of the child, you know for sure that that person is the child’s parent. Well, Jesus’ blood and DNA would have matched Mary’s blood and DNA.
           2. My wife’s mother was named Tineke. And in 2006 our family was in Canada and we visited a sister of Tineke. And after we had been there a while and the children were playing in another room, a brother of Tineke came to visit also. So all of our children were gathered together to meet this great uncle. And when three year old Julia came in, the brother took one look at her and said, “Wow! There is Tineke!” She looked exactly like he remembered Tineke looking when she was a young child. And in the same way, Jesus would have looked like and sounded like His mother, Mary, and her ancestors, because of His genetic connection to them.
        2. Another verse that proves Jesus’ ordinary human nature is **Hebrews 2:14** (p1002), which says, “*Since therefore the children (meaning us human beings) share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] Himself likewise partook of the same things*.” Jesus has the *same* flesh and blood nature that you and I have, which we received from our parents.
     3. Other proofs for Jesus’ ordinary human nature are that He **got tired and hungry and ill, and He felt the misery of being ridiculed and mocked and treated unjustly, and He cried, and eventually He died**, just like happens to all humans. You see, if He had received a specially created human nature, He would have been more like Adam *before* the Fall; He would not have experienced any of these things. But He experienced all of them because He received His ordinary, weakened human nature from His mother.
     4. So He had a true, ordinary, weakened human nature, just like yours and mine.
  2. But not only did Jesus have a *body* like ours, He also had a **soul** like ours.
     1. Boys and girls, do you remember **how God made Adam’s body**? He formed it from the dust of the ground. Was that it then? Was Adam now a living creature? No. For next we read, “*God then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature*.” So Adam’s body was given a soul – he was now a body *and soul* human being. And theologians have all sorts of complex ways of describing the soul and some of it gets very complicated, because it is a bit of a mystery to us. But a really helpful way to think about the soul is explained in the first memory verse from the Holiday Bible club this week. What is the **great commandment**? “*You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, and mind*.” And I know that one of those three words is soul but I think that all three of them, together, describe the soul – heart, soul, and mind. The soul is our emotions, our feelings, our desires, our passions, our will, our conscience, and our thoughts. And it is because we have a soul that we experience love and anger and disgust and sorrow and distress and joy and compassion and sympathy. And I don’t have time to give you all of the Bible references today but you will see in the Gospels that Jesus experienced all of these things also.
     2. And another reason we know that He had a soul like ours is because when He was on the cross, just before He breathed His last breath, He said, “*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*,” meaning His true human soul.
        1. I don’t know if you have ever seen a dead body but you know what? You can literally see that the soul is no longer there; you can see that life-force is gone. The body really does look like a shell.
        2. And it would have been exactly the same with Jesus; while His body stayed there on the cross, His soul went immediately to be with His Father in heaven, and was reunited with His body when He rose from the dead.
     3. So just as we are body and soul, Jesus was also body and soul.

1. Now, before we see why it was necessary for Jesus to be our **ordinary** body and soul Saviour, meaning that He had a true, weakened, body and soul nature like ours, we must see that He is also **our Extraordinary Saviour**. You will have to pay attention here!
   1. When we began to think about the Lord Jesus as our ordinary Saviour, the first thing we noted was that He was conceived the same way that every other human being is conceived – an egg from Mary was fertilized and it became an embryo. But that is only half the story, isn’t it. For look again at what Gabriel said in v35 in answer to Mary’s question about how she could conceive since she was a virgin: “*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*.”
      1. And I have to say that I am hesitant to add anything else to what are perhaps the most wonderfully amazing and mysterious words in the whole Bible. They are a description of something so beautiful and beyond our understanding that our best response is just Wow! Hallelujah! Praise God!
      2. But these words explain why the conception of the Lord Jesus was also **extraordinary**! For while His mother was truly Mary, the conception of Jesus was not by a human father but by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that the Holy Spirit hovered over the face of the waters in Genesis 1 to create this world, the Holy Spirit “overshadowed’ Mary to bring about the conception of Jesus.
      3. Now, with every other human being, the moment of conception is when we begin; when we come into existence. But this was not so with the Lord Jesus.
         1. Notice Gabriel’s words in vv31 and 35: He does not say that the child will *be* or will *become* the “*Son of God*,” he says the child will be *called* the “*Son of God*,” and *called* the “Son of the Most High.”
         2. And we have seen in our Gospel of John series that Jesus existed with the Father and as God before the creation of the world.
         3. So Jesus existed as the Son of God before He became an embryo in Mary’s womb. For Him, the moment of conception was when **He added a human nature to His already existing divine nature**.
         4. And this is exactly what we read in **Philippians 2:6-8**: “*[Jesus] being in very nature God, did not count equality with God a thing to [hold on to], but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*.”
            1. It’s what we sung about earlier:

Though circled by the hosts on high, He deigned to cast a pitying eye  
upon His helpless creature. The whole creation’s Head and Lord,  
by highest seraphim adored, assumed our very nature.

* + 1. And what this meant was that after conception, Jesus was both omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient God – meaning everywhere present, all powerful, and all knowing, and a human embryo that could only be in one place at one time!
       1. John Calvin put it like this: “Here is something marvellous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, He willed to be borne in the virgin’s womb, to go about the earth, and to hang on the cross; yet He continuously filled the world even as He had done from the beginning.”
    2. And this is the glory and the wonder and the amazement of the incarnation – God comes into flesh! And this was done by the power of the Holy Spirit.
  1. And there is one massively important implication of this conceiving work of the Holy Spirit. You see, while Jesus received His true, weakened human nature from Mary, it takes the union of a human mother and a human father for the child to receive a **sinful nature**. So because Jesus was the union of Mary and the Holy Spirit, He did not have a sinful nature.
     1. **Hebrews 4:15** says that Jesus was tempted just like we are tempted, *yet without sin*.”
     2. **Hebrews 7:26** says, “*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners*.”

So now we can put all of this together to see why Jesus is the Saviour we need:

* + 1. Jesus was and is **Ordinary** – He possessed a true, weakened, flesh and blood human nature like ours:
       1. And this was necessary because God had promised that a true son of Eve and Abraham and David would be His Messiah. And Jesus was that Son. God had kept His promise.
       2. But it was necessary also because Adam sinned as an ordinary human being. **Hebrews 2:17** says, “*Therefore [Jesus] had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people*.”
       3. So Jesus is the ordinary Saviour we need!
    2. But Jesus was and is also **extraordinary**. He possessed a divine nature and He was without sin. And this was necessary because our salvation is about the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus.
       1. It is about the **death** of Jesus because if He had been only human, He would not have been able to endure the punishment price that our sin deserves. What our sin deserves is God’s eternal wrath. But because Jesus was human *and God*, He was able to bear the eternal force of God’s anger on the cross and secure forgiveness or all who would believe in Him.
       2. And it is about the **life** of Jesus because we are commandment breakers and we cannot see God unless we are perfectly righteous and obedient. So we need a Saviour who obeyed all of God’s commandments, perfectly, so that we could receive His perfect righteousness. And Jesus lived the perfect life.
       3. And these two aspects of our salvation are what we see in **2 Corinthians 5:21**: “*For our sake [the Father] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*.” So Jesus took our sin on Himself and the moment we believe that what He did on the cross He did for us, we receive His righteousness – His sinless perfection. And from that moment on, that is how the Father sees us – we are justified ones, just-as-if-I-never sinned ones.

So I hope you can see that the incarnation – the coming into flesh – of the Lord Jesus is necessary and essential for your salvation. As one commentator said, “If Jesus Christ had only a true human body, our souls would be lost forever. If he had only a true human soul, our bodies would be lost forever. With [Christians everywhere], therefore, we confess that we need a Saviour who is both truly God as well as truly human so that we can be truly saved.” And Jesus is the Saviour we need! That is why we *have been* singing in praise of the Lord Jesus and while we shall soon sing in praise of Him with these words: Lord, you are love beyond all telling; Saviour and King, we worship you; Emmanuel, within us dwelling, make us and keep us pure and true: Lord, you are love beyond all telling; Saviour and King, we worship you. Amen.