The unique birth of a Son like no other

Text: Luke 1:35

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**Scriptures:** Luke 1:26-35; 2:1-7

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 42, 121, 533, 249, 271, 240

Series: Occasional (incarnation)

Occasion: Advent, Lord’s Supper

Theme: The unique conception and birth of Christ

Proposition: Behold the Son of God, holy child of Mary

**Introduction**

The conception and birth of all creatures is a miracle of God’s intricate, wonderful, design of living organisms. The joining together of a sperm cell from the male with the egg from a female which results in a new living creature is incredibly complex involving the combination of genetic material from two separate individuals to form a third being.

Speaking of human conception, psalmist David writes: “*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them*” (Psalm 139:13-16).

The natural conception and birth of any child is as miraculously wonderful as that of King David, or as yours or mine. In conception, living genetic code and substance from both father and mother is combined to form a new human being.

The conception of Jesus Christ was **even more miraculous** than yours or mine, being a one-of-a kind supernatural event. This was a unique birth of a Son like no other before or since. As we approach Christmas time, we remember the special events leading up to the conception and birth of Christ. This afternoon, we’ll do this under three headings:

1. A divine son
2. A human son
3. A holy son
4. **A divine Son**

When the angel Gabriel visited the virgin Mary, he advised her about her upcoming pregnancy, saying: “*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*” (Luke 1:31-32). Jesus did not change His divine nature when He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. He did not cease being divine, but remained the Son of God as He had always been from before time began. In John 17, Jesus speaks to His Heavenly Father of the love which His perfect Father had loved Him ‘*before the foundation of the world*’ (John 17:24).

When Jesus, the divine Son of God, took on human flesh ‘*being born in the likeness of men*’ (Phil 2:7), He ‘made himself nothing’, laying aside the privileges which were His by right as the divine Son of God. The divine nature of Christ is vividly clear in the gospel accounts. John writes “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Jesus has the same nature, the same character, as His Heavenly Father.

1. He is the “*image of the invisible God*’ (Col 1:15).
2. “*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature*” (Hebrews 1:3)
3. “*In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*” (Col 2:9)

There are many studies in Scripture which I have found thrillingly wonderful, one of the foremost is observing the glorious person of Jesus in the Bible. The perfect characteristics of God the Father are evident in the Son. John writes that Jesus is “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Jesus is 100% truth. This is evident in every word He has spoken, every thought and action. Like God the Father, He never lies. Jesus is 100% grace. His perfect goodness, kindness and compassion are clearly displayed in the gospels.

The eternal nature of the divine Jesus is conveyed to Mary by the angel Gabriel when he says to her: “*He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end*." Unlike any other King, Jesus has a perpetual reign over all of creation. We already see this in the lives of His willing subjects, brothers and sisters, people like us. After Lord’s Supper this afternoon we’ll sing of Christ’s Kingship from the hymn ‘Hark! the herald angels sing: “*Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord! Late in time, behold him come, offspring of the virgin’s womb veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity, please as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel*”.

Jesus, a divine Son – the Godhead veiled in flesh, incarnate Deity, Emmanuel – God with us. We have not yet seen the extent of His coming kingdom, but wait with hope and expectation for the return on the divine Son of God who is also a human son of Mary his mother. Which brings us to our 2nd point.

1. **A human son**

Today it is possible to implant a human embryo into the womb of a woman who is not the biological mother of the child who grows within her. However, artificial insemination is not the mechanism by which Jesus ‘took on flesh’ inside Mary. He is truly her son and she was truly his mother. The Scriptures do not give us detail regarding the process whereby Jesus, the eternal Son of God was, to use the words of the Nicene Creed ‘incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man’. What we do have revealed to us are the words of the angel Gabriel: "*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*” (Luke 1:35).

God, in the person of the Son, became a man. A human being with bodily cellular structure like yours and mine. The incarnate Christ - Jesus in the flesh - was not an apparition/ghost, with the mere appearance of humanity as the heresy of the Docetism would later suggest. Christ took on flesh which was in substance like our bodies. His body functioned as ours do by breathing, growing, eating, drinking, talking, experiencing joy and pain, living, and dying.

He became like us in every way, but without ever transgressing God’s perfect law. He is “*One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” (Heb 4:15). Luke records Christ’s perfect growth as a human son **“***And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man*” (Luke 2:52). However, his favour with mankind did not endure, John writes (1:11) “*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him*”. Jesus, the perfect man, was rejected. During his ministry on this earth, His own family thought he was mad, saying “*He is out of his mind*” (Mark 3:21). The people of His hometown of Nazareth tried to kill Him by throwing him off a cliff (Luke 4:29). On the cross at Calvary He became an ugly outcast human being as Isaiah had prophesied: “*He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him*” (Isaiah 53:2).

As a human being, He suffered as we suffer on this earth; as many do with hunger, thirst, lack of sleep, work pressures, loss and grief, sadness and sorrow. We recall his suffering of body and soul, both as a divine son rejected by His Heavenly Father and as a human son in agony on the cross as we remember His death at Lord’s Supper. When we sing “Hark! the herald angels sing” we’ll take these words on our lips: “*Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth*”. The second birth is a spiritual birth, a birth from above, apart from which nobody can enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:5). This second birth is a birth to holiness, which brings us to our final point:

1. **A holy son**

The angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be called “Holy – the Son of God”. Jesus would be set apart for God. The evil spirits, under Satan’s rule, recognised the holiness of Christ: “*I know who you are the Holy One of God*” (Mark 1:24). Simon Peter, speaking for himself and the other disciples declared “*We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God*’ (John 6:69).

The Scriptures clearly reveal that God the Father is absolutely holy (e.g. Isaiah 6:3). He is the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 1:4). It is the holiness of God which separates Him from sinful mankind. We see this visibly represented in the boundary which was set around Mount Sinai, the people being warned not to break through, lest they perish (Exo 19:22). There the Holy God of Israel was distant, His presence being manifested in thunder, lightning and thick cloud and a very loud trumpet blast so that all the people in the camp trembled.

In Christ, the child born to the virgin Mary, the holy God entered bodily into His broken, unholy, creation. The glory of Christ’s holiness was seen in the power and authority of His teaching, His healing miracles and His command over the forces of nature. His holiness was visibly represented as His transfiguration when **“***His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light*” (Matt 17:2).

Not long after this, a centurion together with others who had watched Jesus die, saw the earthquake which then occurred and the resurrection of many who had died and then appeared in the city of Jerusalem. They said, “*Truly this was the Son of God*” (Matthew 27:54. We remember the death of Mary’s holy child this afternoon at Lord’s Supper.

We are reminded that it is through the perfect holiness of Jesus that we become holy in the sight of God. Already, brothers and sisters in Christ, we are declared to be holy being justified by the perfect sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus. God says: “*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (1 Peter 2:9).

Already we are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit to become progressively more holy with our active cooperation. As Paul writes to the Philippians: “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*” (Phil 2:12-15).

However, we are not yet, what we will one day be in Christ, perfectly holy as He is. As we proclaim the death of Christ until He comes, we look forward to that day when sin will be entirely in the past and we live forever with the divine, human, holy son of Mary, the Son of God. Today we continue to follow the leadership of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, being ‘*more than conquerors through him who loved us*’ (Rom 8:37).

In a moment we will sing of the unique birth of a Son like no other:

“*Child in the manger, infant of Mary
Outcast and Stranger, Lord of us all
Child Who inherits all our transgressions
All our demerits upon Him fall*

*Once the most holy Child of salvation
Gently and lowly lived here below
Now as our glorious mighty Redeemer
See Him victorious over each foe*

*Prophets foretold Him, Infant of wonder
Angels behold Him on His throne
Worthy our Saviour of all our praises
Happy forever are His own*”

Behold the Son of God, holy child of Mary.

AMEN