

Christmas Day

Luke 2:1-20

December 25, 2021 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

The Miracle of Christmas!

Were you surprised when you opened your presents under the tree? Did you get what you expected or hoped for? Were you disappointed with what you got? Are you going to exchange it? No matter how surprised or overwhelmed you might be with your Christmas present, it can not even come close to how surprised and overwhelmed those shepherds were on the first Christmas. To get a visit from some angels and to hear those heavenly voices was truly amazing. But even more amazing than the visit was the message the angels shared. **“Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”** How can the Lord be born? How can the uncreated be a creature? How could God become human? How could God and man exist in the same time in the same person? It is a truth so simple a child can grasp it, yet so profound that the wisest professor can not make sense of it.

The angel had it right – the Lord is born. Jesus is true God and also true man. That’s why we have two candles on our altar. They represent Jesus, the light of the world, who has two natures. We distinguish the two natures of Christ. That is to say, Jesus is not part God and part man. He is not 50% God and 50% man. He is 100% God and 100% man. Imagine pouring 10 ounces of water into a 10 ounce cup and then also pouring 10 ounces of oil into the cup. It would not fit. But it does in the person of Jesus Christ. 100% God and 100% human fit into one person.

There are Bible passages which refer to Jesus as God and other passages which refer to him as a man. The human nature did not change into God, and the divine nature did not turn into man. Jesus did not become some sort of missing link between God and man. It is not like when you make a cake by putting all sorts of ingredients together and getting a different substance after you bake it. Once you bake a cake, you can not separate out the eggs and flour. Jesus never stops being both God and man. We want to make sure that we distinguish the two natures of Christ.

While we make sure to distinguish the two natures of Christ, we never separate the two natures of Christ. The divine nature is never found apart from the human nature and vice-versa. Nothing happened to Jesus, the son of Mary, that did not also happen to God. That means that God lived on this earth. God has a body. God cried at the funeral of a friend. God

suffered and struggled. God was nailed to the cross for you. God died. In the darkness of the grave, God’s body was laid. St. Paul explained that the rulers of this age (1 Corinthians 2:80), **“crucified [not just a man, but] the Lord of glory.”** And to the Ephesians elders, he explained that God bought the church (Acts 20:28), **“with his own blood.”** The same Jesus who said, “I am thirsty,” is the same one who said, “I will be with you always.” So, Jesus is unchangeable and yet he grew up as a boy in Nazareth. He knows all things and yet he learned things at Hebrew school. He is eternal and yet a new-born baby. He is all-powerful yet too weak to carry his cross. He is present with us right now, even according to his human nature – you just can’t see him.

To help us grasp this, some theologians have almost coined a new phrase. They call Jesus the “God-man.” It is not as if the divine nature was poured into the human nature the way we pour water from one pitcher into another. When you do that, one container empties and the other one fills up. Maybe you can think of it as the way the body and the soul are together in a human being. Everything the body does effects the soul and vice-versa, but body and soul are still separate. But even that illustration limps because the soul can not exist by itself. As we sing in one of our hymns, “How this can be, I leave to thee.”

The purpose of this microscopic look at the person of Jesus Christ is not to confuse you. the goal is that you get a glimpse of the awesomeness of our Savior. The very fact that Jesus could exist as true God and true man is a miracle. and that miracle continues even today. The same body and blood that laid in the manger is the same body and blood we receive in the Lord’s Supper. Jesus Christ, literally, felt your pain. No matter what you are going through or what burden you are carrying, he can look you in the eye and say, “I understand. And I came to make it better. I came to take your sin and guilt away and to suffer your death for you. I came from heaven to earth so you could go from earth to heaven. I rose to give you physical and eternal life after death.”

Staring at the person of Jesus Christ in the manger can not help but amaze you with how much God loves you. He loves you so much he would do anything, including suspend the laws of nature and physics, in order to save you. If a fish in your fish tank was sick and dying, would you think of becoming a fish and joining it in the fish tank in order to help the fish? Probably not. Would you think of becoming an insignificant ant in order to get a message to the ants? No. But God became human to save you. How greatly God must love you.

Martin Luther once said that the devil would really be able to put a lot of doubt about salvation into our minds when we are close to death if he could whisper in our ear, “Jesus can not be your Savior because he is only a man.” Or “Jesus can not be your Savior because he is only God.” You see, if Jesus is only a man, then even if he lived a perfect life, he could only save himself. And if Jesus is only a man, then his death can not count for the whole world, including you and me. If Jesus is only God, then he would not be able to serve as your substitute and pay for your sins with his death. Because Jesus is the God-Man, who lived, died and rose for you, your sins are forgiven. You are going to heaven.

In Charles Dickens’ famous story – A Christmas Carol – the ghost of Jacob Marley (he’s the one who first visited Scrooge and told him that three other ghosts would visit him that night) was weighed down with all sorts of chains – chains of regret for things he did wrong and good things he failed to do. Every one of us has such chains. We have done things wrong and we have failed to do good things that we should have. The guilt of our sins weighs us down and drags us to death. If you want to open a lock, you need the right key. And only one key can unlock the chains of sin and death. The key that frees you from your sin and opens the door to eternal life is the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, laying in a manger for you. That is the true miracle of Christmas. Amen.