December 18/19, 2021

The Son of the Most High God

Foretold: 2021Advent Series

Luke 1:26-38

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This morning I would like to offer you a Christmas present. No matter who you are, no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what's breaking your heart, no matter what's keeping you up at night, no matter what it is that holds you in bondage, what I offer you this Christmas is *peace*. That's what we want to talk about today. If you have a Bible, turn with us to the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1.

We began Advent with Ryan reminding us that Advent starts in the dark. But it was foretold that one would come who would announce that the Light of the world was coming. The second week, Jeff told us the story of the wicked King Ahaz. God sent Isaiah, the prophet, to plead with him to change his ways and to turn to God. God even gave him a sign that a virgin would be with child, and they would call his name Immanuel—the reminder that no matter how dark it got, *God was with them*. This would be just a shadow of the promise to come. Last week, Josh reminded us that the great King Herod was fearful, and intimidated by a baby king, born in a small, obscure town, as foretold by Micah the prophet. Luke, chapter 1, is familiar text that is often read at the Christmas season. But it's easy to miss how much in that text reflects what has been foretold for hundreds and even thousands of years. So, before we read that text, I want to pull all this together, and I want to tell you a little story. So put your finger in Luke, sit back, and relax. It's story time with Bryan! *(laughter)*

The story goes back to the beginning. God created the world and He created it good—a virtual paradise on earth. But Adam and Eve rebelled. They decided to be their own gods, thinking they could make things better. So they sinned against God, and immediately there was a barrier between a good God and sinful men and women. But literally, before you can turn a page of the Bible, God has already made a promise that somehow, through the seed of a woman—which means a human—God would raise up a Savior to make things right again. In the very next chapter, we have the first murder where Cain kills his brother, Abel. By Genesis chapter 6, the description is, "*Everyone was evil all the time*," to where God determined to bring judgment to the world to stop the evil, and essentially to start over. But there was one righteous man by the name of Noah, whom God would save from judgment through the building of an ark that would be a shadow, a picture of the fulfillment of the promise to send a Savior. By Genesis chapters 10 and 11, the earth is filled with people who are determined to worship themselves as God. They even build a monument to celebrate their belief that they are God, called a Ziggurat. It is into that context that we are introduced to a couple that God pulls out, and says to them, "If you're willing to trust Me, if you're willing to follow Me and to walk in My ways, I will bless you. I will make you into a great nation, and through one of your descendants, all the nations of the world will be blessed." That couple was Abraham and Sarah. And they believed, and God called them righteous. But Abraham became concerned, "What if I blow it? What if I fail to keep the covenant?" And in a most unexpected message, God told Abraham, that, "*I will shed My blood if you fail to keep the covenant, to make it right."*

In some mysterious way, by Genesis 15, we now understand that somehow this seed of a woman—from Genesis 3:15—would be God in the flesh, who somehow would shed His blood because of our inability to keep the covenant. So, Abraham had Isaac; Isaac had Jacob; Jacob had Joseph, and the nation of Israel ends up in bondage in Egypt for four hundred years. Then God raises up a deliverer by the name of Moses, who leads them to the Promised Land. Moses is followed by Joshua; Joshua was followed by a period called The Judges. Then the nation of Israel decides they want a human king. We talk a lot about kings and kingdoms in theology. But the reality is, for us as 21st century Americans, we have no idea what we're really talking about, because we've never lived in a kingdom, and we've never lived under a king. In the ancient world, there were primarily city states, or some larger nations, and whether you lived or died, whether you had any chance to raise a family and flourish, or would be terrified your whole life, came down to one simple thing: "Who is your king?" In the ancient world, a king was not just a political leader, he was a military leader; he was a warrior. If you had a king that was good and benevolent and mighty, you stood a pretty good chance of having a life. But if your king was weak, cowardly, or wicked, your life would be miserable. These were real people that had real children, that just wanted a chance to live and to love and to have a life. But it all came down to, "Who is your king?"

The first king of Israel was Saul. Saul was an insecure, fearful king, who never really learned what it means to trust God. And for forty years, the people suffered under the oppression of the Philistines. God finally removes Saul, and he is replaced by a young shepherd boy by the name of David. David was *a man after God's own heart*. David was a mighty warrior. David was a good and benevolent king, and under David, the people would flourish and prosper in a way they had never before, and they have never since. By 2 Samuel, chapter 7, the text tells us that David had become so powerful, that there was peace and rest on every side, something almost unheard of in the ancient world. And the people were free to live and to prosper. It's into that context that David tells God he wants to build him a permanent house. At that time, God still dwelt in the tabernacle, which was a portable temple, a tent. But David wanted to express his worship to God and build him a beautiful house—a temple! But through Nathan, the prophet, God tells David, "No," and in a bit of a play on words, he tells him, "Rather I'm going to build *you* a house—a dynasty—because one of your descendants will sit on a throne that will last forever. And he will sit and reign over a kingdom that will last forever. This God promised David.

But David wasn't a perfect king. Not long after this, David made a series of disastrous choices that brought heartache and suffering to his people. And once again, the people were disappointed and heartbroken and longed for that ideal king, that wouldn't disappoint them again. After David, was his son, Solomon. Solomon had some great moments and some terrible moments. After Solomon, the kingdom split in two—North and South—the North called Israel, the South called Judah. The North was led by all wicked kings. And eventually God allowed the Assyrians to come in and to conquer them, to destroy their land, and to haul the people off into captivity. The South, called Judah, had some good kings and some wicked kings, but they were absolutely terrified, and it was only a matter of time until the Assyrians and the enemies came in and destroyed their lives.

Jeff told us the story of wicked King Ahaz. God sent Isaiah the prophet to plead with him to change his ways and to trust Him. God offered a sign, but Ahaz said, "I don't need it." God gave him the sign, whether he wanted it or not, and in chapter 7, verse 14: **The young woman would have a child, and he would be named Immanuel, God with us.** It would be the reminder that no matter

how dark it gets, no matter how difficult it gets, no matter how hopeless it gets, God is with you. And God will be faithful, and He will keep His promises. In Isaiah, chapter 9, we read familiar words that we often read at Christmas time. It seemed all was lost; it seemed there was no hope. Humanly speaking, it seemed likely this would literally be the end of the nation of Israel when God speaks through Isaiah the prophet, and says this:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, (Shalom)
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (*NASB, Isaiah 9:6-7)

Two things to highlight there. The promise is that when this King reigns, it will be *shalom forever*. (And) **It is the zeal of the LORD of hosts that will bring this to pass.** The Hebrew title, **LORD of hosts,** essentially means the general or commander of the armies of heaven. It's a military term; it's a military title. It's very important to understand this is what God promised; this is what God will deliver. And it is not dependent on any country; it's not dependent on any political party; it's not dependent on any government; it's not dependent on any ruler; it's not dependent upon a majority. It has nothing to do with any of that. It is the Commander of the armies of heaven that will bring this to pass. So the people waited…and they waited…and they waited…and they waited. About six hundred or so years to the first century, the nation of Israel was under the oppression of Rome. For most of the Jewish people, the thought that the promise would ever be fulfilled, that they would ever experience what God promised them, was all but gone…until this glorious moment, recorded in Luke chapter 1, starting in verse 26:

> **Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one!** (Literally, "Grace given one". Mary didn't deserve this; it was a gift of God's grace.) **The Lord *is* with you." But she was very perplexed at *this* statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor** (grace) **with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.** (*NASB, Luke 1:26-31)

The wording in verse 31 is very exact. As a matter of fact, it copies the wording exactly from Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14. This is the fulfillment of that which was foretold. His name shall be Jesus. Jeff reminded us: Jesus—the *Lord* is *salvation*.

> **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God;** (So Mary would have been 12 or 13, maybe 14 at the oldest. She wasn't a theologian. She wasn't an expert in the Old Testament Law. But every young Jewish boy or girl would have immediately

understood that that title, *Son of the Most High God*—Hebrew, Elyon—means He will be God.) **…and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."** (Just as had been foretold) **Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High** (Elyon) **will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.** (Vs. 32-35)

In this text, you have all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—involved in this glorious moment. When the text says, **the Power of** (Elyon) **the Most High will overshadow you,** this is very interesting language. There are two significant places we find this. One is in the Old Testament. As I mentioned before, the temple was a portable temple called the tabernacle. It was essentially a tent, and as the nation of Israel moved, the tent had to be packed up exactly as God had told them, moved to the new location, set up in the center of camp, with the tents all around, and after everything was set up and ready, as the Old Testament describes it, there would come a cloud that would *overshadow* the tabernacle, as the awesome presence of God would enter the Holy of Holies. The other place it is used, is by Luke in the New Testament, in a moment we refer to as the *transfiguration,* as Jesus and Peter, James, and John were at the top of the mountain. Suddenly they were covered in a cloud. They were *overshadowed* by this cloud that represented the awesome presence of God, and out of that cloud spoke a voice, "*This is My Son*". So, when Gabriel says that Mary will be overshadowed by the presence of the Most High, he is saying that God Himself will Father this Child. Therefore, your Child will actually be called the Son of God—God in the flesh—just as it had been foretold.

And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Vs. 36-38)

It's very important to understand that Jesus was not a dynamic leader, full of charisma, who started a new religious movement. He was the One who had been foretold for hundreds and even thousands of years. He was the seed of a woman from Genesis 3:15. He was the way of salvation from judgment, foreshadowed by the ark. He was the seed of Abraham, through whom all of the world would be blessed, the One who would shed His blood, because of our inability to keep the covenant—a message delivered approximately 2000 years before Christ. He was the Promised Descendant of David, who one day will sit on His throne forever, and usher in a new kingdom where He will deliver Shalom forever. Foretold approximately 1000 years before Christ, He was the One for whom Isaiah, the prophet, foretold approximately 700 years before Christ, and He is the Son of the Most High God.

So, here's the deal. If that's true, then Jesus wins…for sure…no matter what…and all those who believe in Him win with Him…for sure…no matter what! It's easy to get caught up in all the emotions of the culture, and we can find ourselves so fearful, so anxious, so angry, so discouraged, so hopeless. But if He is the Son of the Most High God, Jesus wins…for sure…no matter what!

No nation can change that. No government can change that. No political party can change that. No virus can change that. No disease can change that. No heartache can change that. No failure can change that. No addiction can change that. No mental illness can change that. Nothing can change that! He is the Son of the Most High God and Jesus wins…for sure…no matter what!

If that's true, friends, *we need to act like it*. Do you hear what I'm saying? *If that's true, then we need to act like it.* We need to act like we believe that's true. All hope is not lost. The world is not falling apart. There's no reason for such anxiety and so much fear and so much hopelessness. Hey, God's got this…God's got this! Everything is under control! It's going to be alright…and our future is glorious! The culture is coming unraveled, and what they don't need is more of the same. What they need is *light* in the darkness. What they need is to be told that the One who had been foretold for thousands of years has come to be the Savior of the world. And that through His death, burial and resurrection, He has conquered sin and death once and for all. And He's coming back, and He will usher in His kingdom, and He will sit on the throne, and He will bring Shalom to the world forever! And it's offered freely to those who choose to believe, and to receive it…for sure…no matter what! It seems to me, if that's true, you have every reason for peace…no matter what…this Christmas season. Merry Christmas!

Our Father, we are thankful this morning. The One who was foretold for hundreds of years has come, God in the flesh, to be the Savior of the world. Lord, it's a crazy world but we know Jesus wins, and we know that those of us who believe, win with Him. Lord, may we be a light in a dark world and bring hope where there is despair. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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