

Not too long ago, when a baby was born people would say things like “a miracle of life,” or “a miracle of birth.” But not so much anymore. The wonder of birth has been tempered these days. Having a child is looked upon now not so much as a miracle, but as choice – something that I decided, I did.

Advent and Christmas, in a way, are very comforting, reminds us that birth is still a miracle; life is still a matter of creation; in the hands of God – no matter what we think we can do. If God didn't allow it or permit it, all the science in the world couldn't create a single life. God is still God, as much as we – following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve – would like to be!

The Holy Gospel today. A miraculous birth of a virgin girl. But today we heard not so much of Mary, but of Joseph. His reaction to news. Joseph isn't thinking miraculously – he thinks biologically; Mary's been unfaithful; divorce is in order. He's simply a man who wants to do the right thing. He's not about to take some young girl's word for it. Can you imagine how that would sound? “Joseph, it's not what you think. An angel came to me, told me that I would have a child by the Holy Spirit who would be the Christ, the Savior, and His name Jesus.” We'd all doubt her; after we stopped laughing. But this miracle birth is miracle of miracle birth.

It takes an angel appearing in a dream to convince Joseph that things aren't as they appear to be. Tell him the hand of God is at work here. The Holy Spirit has come to Mary. She has not been unfaithful, but in the very opposite – she has shown great faith in God; is now the mother of the God. Do not be afraid, Joseph. This is miraculous birth for you and all the world. Name him Jesus, **will save His people from their sins.**

The early church fathers, in considering this miraculous birth, also then thought of another – the miraculous new birth that we witness this morning for little Lucy, and that takes place for each of us in the waters of Holy Baptism. It is the focus of much of their Christmas preaching. They knew the Word of God that created faith and miraculous birth of Mary also does the same for us today. As Luther puts it in the Small Catechism: “But with the Word of God it is a Baptism, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.” The Word of God gives life and continues to give life.

So the miraculous birth of Jesus -and Lucy; remind us once again **that birth is still a miracle**. The Holy Spirit coming to us through the Word of God creating life. Life in a young virgin's womb; life in our cold, sinful hearts. Your birth, here in Word and water; miraculous birth, born as children of God.

Christmas is not just about Jesus and history. It's about His birth for you. His birth **in** you. It's about Lucy, it's about your baptismal life; that all matters of life and death are in the hands of your Heavenly Father. For as the angel told Joseph, **He will save His people from their sins**.

The prophecy of Immanuel. Everyone knew it. That prophecy buried under 700 years of Israelite dust. Isaiah spoke it to the faithless King Ahaz whose plotting war and pagan alliances, but Isaiah commends him to sit still, wait, trust the Lord. Ahaz didn't want a sign, yet God gave him one through Isaiah. Ahaz would rebuke the Lord; and for Ahaz and people to this day, reject Immanuel, God with us, and you get destruction.

Every generation spoke of that Immanuel promise, but the promise actually goes back a lot further than Isaiah and Ahaz. Back to the dust of Eden. To Adam and Eve, the savior promised. The promise of Eve's seed. Well biologically, the seed is from the man. But no man involved in this offspring. Only the woman. Only a daughter of Eve as bearer of the Promise. Adam's sin is humanity's sin. There needs to be a second Adam, one who is "bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh" but without sin. A virgin must conceive.

God must take the initiative. He must do the work. We cannot save ourselves it takes a miracle unto you. The conception of Jesus says precisely this. It silences all of our claims, our efforts, our choices, our doing. You cannot rescue yourself.

Joseph woke from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. You too. We do so because God never just commands – He always also gives. We do what the Lord has told us to do. Baptize. Hear His Word. Confess, repent. Receive His forgiveness. Come to His altar. Give Him thanks and praise. We pray. We speak. We love. We give. We care.

It should not take an angel in a dream to convince you that things aren't as they appear to be. Tell you the hand of God has been at work here. The Holy Spirit has come unto you. Not because you've been faithful, the very opposite – God has always been faithful to you. Do not be afraid.

This miracle birth came for you; in a miracle of life you're baptismally reborn in Him. **Immanuel** God is still with us. Still creating life. Still giving life, both physical and spiritual. Still accomplishing what He came to do: **save His people from their sins**. Lucy, you, are given miraculous birth to live forever now; **you who are called to belong to Jesus**.