

Born Of God
John 1:1-14 & Titus 3:4-7

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, how did Mary get pregnant? You know, it didn't happen in the normal way, she became pregnant through her ear.

I see the looks on your faces. You're thinking, "Pastor's really gone off the deep end this time."

Really? You have probably heard me say it before, and I will say it again in the future. While I say it in part to get your attention, it is also true. Listen to what happened as I read it to you from Luke's Gospel.

Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 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. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

At this point, she is not pregnant.

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

Does she have faith to believe it can happen to her? No, not yet. She is doubting. She is thinking with earthly thoughts. She knows how the program works, she knows the means by which God puts new life into the human body so that children can be born. She hasn't done anything like that yet, so there is no way that she can be pregnant.

And the angel answered her, "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. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

She is told that God isn't going to use the normal means of procreating this child. This child is going to be conceived in a new way, the Holy Spirit is going to bring about this pregnancy. And as the angel speaks to her, he also gives her evidence of the miraculous working of God to make even Elizabeth pregnant. As Gabriel speaks, the Holy Spirit is at work as well. The Spirit is coming to Mary in the Word of God she is hearing. It is the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, who she is hearing. As this Word comes to her, the Spirit is beginning faith in her that indeed such a thing can happen.

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Yes, the angel departed. His work was done. He was the vehicle by which God's Word was spoken to Mary. He was the one who spoke the Word by which the Holy Spirit was working upon Mary. It was the Spirit's working in the Word that she heard that was miraculously changing her heart, moving her to believe the miracle would take place. As she heard the Word, as the Spirit wrought faith in her, and she believed, she became pregnant.

As I said, she became pregnant through her ear.

Jesus was not conceived by the will of man. Instead, the second person of the Trinity, the Word of God which was with God in the beginning, and by which all things were spoken into existence, took on human flesh in the womb of the virgin named Mary. It was by the will and the Word of God that Mary became pregnant with her holy Child.

We like to think of the human-ness of the infant Jesus. As He lays there in the manger wrapped in swaddling clothes, He seems so helpless and innocent. And indeed, He was. He relied upon His earthly mother for all His needs at that point. He nursed from her and was fed. She carried Him wherever He needed to go. She changed the clothes that protected His soft flesh.

But this Child was such because of His choice. Before this day, He is God. He is God who created all that exists and sustains it. He is God who will judge the living and the dead. He is God who rules over all, is in all, and who knows all. He is God who chooses to humble Himself and take on human flesh.

He chooses to do this so that He might redeem you and me from our lack of innocence. He becomes man so that His innocence might be sacrificed to pay for our sinfulness.

But imagine that Mary had become pregnant today. Her friends may have suggested to her that at her age, she isn't ready to have a child and that she should abort it. And certainly, don't tell Joseph about it. If it isn't his, he'll get really angry.

Today we are all caught up in the will of man, what is it that we desire? What is it that will make our lives better? What will make our lives easier and more enjoyable? You and I, for much of our lives are trying to satisfy the will of our flesh and keep it happy.

But this precious Child, whose birth we celebrate this holy morn, wasn't born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. As the apostle Paul proclaimed to us through the Galatian church, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* (Galatians 4:4-5 ESV)

Yes, today we gather to celebrate the birth of God's own Son, born of a woman to free us from sin and death and hell. He came that we might be adopted into His holy and eternal family.

And how is it that we are redeemed? How is it that you and I are adopted into God's holy family? This too does not happen according to the will of flesh nor of the will of man.

You are those spoken of in our Gospel lesson. You are those who have received Him. You are those He gave the right to be the children of God. As Mary became pregnant, so you also have become pregnant – pregnant with faith. Our text speaks of you, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* It is not your natural birth that is most important, but your second birth. You were born of the will of God, by Water and the Word.

God comes to you in water and the Word, the miracle called baptism. In that miracle, you are born again and made children of God. You are baptized into Christ, into the death and resurrection of this Child whose birth we celebrate today.

Yes, we celebrate Christ's birth. We rejoice that God's will was that the Son become a man. We give thanks to God that He would humble Himself to redeem us.

I don't know if there are many presents still unwrapped, sitting under the Christmas trees in your homes. Those gifts we unwrapped or will unwrap are a reminder of the gift that is ours, wrapped in a manger and enfolded in

swaddling clothes this morning. In that innocent flesh is the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. They are the gifts God gives us in His only begotten Son, who was born of the will of God.

Let us rejoice this holy morning and give thanks to His holy name, now and forevermore.

Read TLH hymn #80.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.