**SUNDAY, 12/19/21**

**SERMON**

**LUKE 1:39-55**

Christmas was almost here.

Six-year-old Brandon knew he would be getting many gifts from his parents.

He woke up early one morning

 and decided to do something special for his Mom and Dad.

He would make pancakes all by himself for breakfast for his parents.

He found a big bowl and spoon.

He pulled a chair to the counter and opened the cupboard.

But as he pulled out the heavy flour canister, his small hands slipped,

 and it fell to the floor spilling the flour everywhere.

He scooped some of the flour into the bowl with his hands,

 mixed in most of a cup of milk, and added some sugar,

 leaving a floury trail on the floor,

 which now had a few tracks left by his kitten.

Brandon was covered with flour and getting frustrated.

He wanted this to be something very good for Mom and Dad,

 but it was turning out very bad.

He didn't know what to do next, whether to put it all into the oven,

 or on the stove, but he didn't know how the stove worked.

Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl of pancake mix.

As he reached to push her away, he knocked the egg carton to the floor,

 breaking almost every egg.

Frantically he tried to clean up this monumental mess.

But he slipped on the eggs, and fell into the mess on the floor,

 getting his pajamas white and sticky.

Suddenly he saw his Dad standing at the door.

Big crocodile tears welled up in Brandon's eyes.

All he had wanted to do was something good.

But all he had done was make a terrible mess.

He was sure big time punishment was coming, maybe even a spanking.

But his father just looked at him.

Then, walking through the mess, Dad picked up his crying son,

 hugged him and loved him,

 getting his own pajamas white and sticky in the process.

That is how God deals with us.

We try to do something good in life, but it turns into a mess.

God doesn't get angry.

He picks us up, wipes away our tears, and hugs us close to Himself.

And He is willing to get our mess all over Himself in the process.

God loves us no matter what we have done.

And He sent His Son to us, so we could understand and believe.

Bernie was working hard to become an airplane pilot.

He sat in the beginner's seat for the first time.

Beside him sat his instructor teaching Bernie to trust his instruments.

"Your instincts will fool you," the instructor told him.

"You must learn that even though you may feel you are flying south,

 if your compass says you are flying east, you better believe it.

Often when a plane is surrounded by swirling mist,

 and being buffeted by strong winds,

 you may feel you are in a dive, and be tempted to pull back on the controls. But if your instruments say you are flying level,

 or they tell you that you are climbing,

 you better believe them.

To pull back on the controls at that point,

 will almost certainly cause a crash, and probably death.

Trust your instruments, not your own instincts."

Trusting your instruments is important advice if you are flying an airplane.

Trusting God is important in life.

Trust God that he will accomplish what He wants.

When God says: "I love you," believe Him,

 even if right now you can't even like yourself.

When God says I forgive, trust Him,

 even if you can't forgive yourself.

When He says I am with you always, believe Him.

Don't trust your instincts – that will only get you into trouble.

Trust the one who knows what He is doing.

Trust God, not your thoughts or feelings.

God knows what is best.

Elizabeth was way beyond the years for childbirth,

 but nevertheless she was to have a child.

But Zechariah cried out, "How can this be?

Six months later, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary,

 Elizabeth's young cousin.

She also was going to have a son.

 "How can this possibly be since I am a virgin?" she enquired.

How was God going to accomplish this amazing thing?

These were not words of unbelief, but of wonder and praise.

And Mary knew she had been greatly blessed,

 even when she had trouble understanding and believing.

God can do anything!

The great trouble is that people take everything in general,

 and do not take it to themselves.

Suppose a someone said to you:

 "There was a man in Europe who died last week,

 and left five million dollars to a certain individual."

You would probably reply something like:

“Well, I don't doubt that. It is rather a common thing to happen.”

And then you don't think anything more about it.

But suppose that someone says, "But he left the money to you."

Then you would pay much more attention.

"To me?" you might say.

“Yes, he left it to you.”

Now you become suddenly interested.

You want to know all about it.

Jesus came to earth in human form for you.

We often think Jesus came to save others.

But when we accept He came because of us, it makes a big difference.

He came for everyone – including you.

When we realize the truth – that Jesus came to earth as a baby because of us,

 we begin to believe Jesus really does love us – each and every one of us.

He came because He loves each one of us.

He came to show us how much He loves us.

He came to give each of us eternal life.

When we believe this, we begin to pay attention.

Heaven isn't simply a destination; it is a way of life now.

And we can trust God really does love and care for us,

 each and everyone of us

Soon we will celebrate one of the greatest mysteries of life.

God takes on human flesh, and is born in a stable in Bethlehem.

Our Creator takes on human flesh and blood

 in order to save the very creatures who ruined his perfect world.

It would seem impossible that such an event would ever happen.

Yet it does.

Hope is not what you expect – it is what you would never dream.

It is a wild, improbable tale with a pinch-me-I'm-dreaming ending.

It is Abraham adjusting his bifocals so he can see, not his grandson, but his son.

It is Moses standing in the Promised Land,

 not with Aaron or Miriam at his side,

 but with Elijah and the transfigured Christ.

It is Zechariah left speechless at the sight of his wife Elizabeth,

 gray-haired and pregnant.

It is Joseph, silent and wondering how this can all work out.

Hope is not a granted wish or a favor performed.

It is much greater than that.

It is a zany, unpredictable dependence on a God

 who loves to surprise us out of our socks

 and be there in the flesh to see our reaction.

You are precious to him.

 So precious that

 He became like you

 so you would come to Him.

AMEN