**SUNDAY, 12/26/21**

**SERMON**

**LUKE 2:41-52**

 “Do you mean to tell me God became a baby . . .”

The one posing the question sounded very puzzled.

His thick eyebrows furrowed in doubt and his eyes squinted in caution.

Though there were places to sit, he opted not to do so.

He preferred to stand safely behind the crowd,

 unsure, yet intrigued by what he was hearing.

Throughout the lecture he had listened intently,

 occasionally uncrossing his arms to stoke his whiskered chin.

Now, however, he stood upright, punching the air with his finger as he questioned.

“. . . and that he was born in a stable?”

He looked as though he had walked down from one of the adjacent Colorado mountains: stocking hat, down vest, nylon leggings, hiking boots.

And he sounded as though he honestly did not know if the story he was hearing

 was a mountain legend or the gospel truth.

"Yes, that is what I mean to say," the lecturer responded.

 "And then, after becoming a baby, he was raised in a blue-collar home?

 He never wrote any books or held any offices,

 yet he called himself the son of God?"

“That is right.”

The lecturer being questioned was Landon Saunders,

 the voice of the Heartbeat Radio program.

No one could tell the story of the Nazarene like Landon could.

 "He never traveled outside of his own country, never studied at a university,

 never lived in a palace, and yet asked to be regarded as

 the creator of the universe?"

“Yes, That is correct.”

Many in the audience were a bit unnerved by the dialogue.

They had memorized verses and responses loaded in their minds.

They could defend a lifestyle, but not a Savior.

They were ready to argue morality, doctrine, heaven, and hell.

But they were not ready argue a man.

Jesus had always been someone they simply accepted.

These questions were a bit too aggressive for their faith.

 "And this crucifixion story – he was betrayed by his own people?

 No followers came to his defense?

 And then he was executed like a common junkyard thief?"

“Yes, that is the gist of it.”

The authenticity of the questioner did not allow one to regard him as a cynic,

 nor to dismiss him as a show-off.

To the contrary, he seemed nervous about commanding such attention.

His awkwardness betrayed his inexperience in public speaking.

But his desire to know was just a little bit stronger than his discomfort,

 so he continued.

“And after the killing he was buried in a borrowed grave?”

“Yes, he had no grave of his own, nor money with which to purchase one.”

The honesty of the dialogue kept the audience spellbound.

They were witnessing one of those rare times when two people

 were willing to question the holy.

Here were two men standing on opposite sides of a deep chasm, one asking the other if the bridge which stretched between them could actually be trusted.

There was a hint of emotion in the student's voice

 as he carefully worded the next question.

 "And according to what is written, after three days in the grave,

 he was resurrected and made appearances to over five hundred people?"

“Yes, that is right.”

 "And all this was to prove that God still loves his people

 and provides a way for us to return to him?"

“Right.”

Everyone in the room knew what question was coming next,

 and was uncomfortable.

 "Doesn't that all sound rather . . . " He paused for a few seconds,

 searching for the right adjective.

“Doesn't that all sound rather absurd?”

All the heads turned in perfect sync and looked at Landon.

Their heads were all spinning as they were forced to look

 at Jesus from a new angle.

Christianity . . . absurd?

Jesus on a cross . . . absurd?

The Incarnation . . . absurd?

The Resurrection . . .absurd?

Landon's response was simple:

“Yes. Yes, I suppose it does sound absurd, doesn't it?”

The audience didn't like that answer. They didn't like it at all.

They wanted Landon to tell the fellow how it made sense!

Diagram the dispensations.

Present fulfilled prophecies.

Explain the fulfillment of the Old Law.

The covenant. Reconciliation. Redemption.

Of course it made sense.

Don't let him describe God's actions as absurd!

But then it began to dawn on the listeners: What God did makes sense.

It makes sense that Jesus would be our sacrifice

 because a sacrifice was needed to justify our presence before God.

It makes sense God would use the Old Law to teach us our need for grace.

It makes sense that Jesus would be our High Priest.

What God did makes sense.

It can be taught, charted, and put in books on systematic theology.

However, why God did it, is absolutely absurd.

When one leaves the method, and examines the motive,

 the carefully stacked blocks of logic begin to tumble.

That type of love is not logical.

It cannot be neatly outlined in a sermon, or explained in a term paper.

Some of the scenarios in the Bible look more like the adventures of

 Sinbad the Sailor rather than stories for Vacation Bible School.

Aaron, the Holy priest of God,

 leading the Israelites dancing around the golden calf?

The sons of Jacob, tying up their younger brother

 and sending off to slavery in Egypt?

Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit?

Noah drunk and naked in his own tent?

David, Sampson, and so many others?

These are the chosen ones of God?

This is the royal lineage of the King?

These are the ones who were to carry out God's mission?

It is easy to see the absurdity.

Why didn't God let the globe spin off its axis?

Yet even after generations of people had spit in his face, God still loved them.

After a nation of chosen ones had stripped him naked

 and ripped his incarnated flesh, He still died for us.

And He still waits for us to come close to him.

It is inexplicable.

It doesn't have a drop of logic nor a thread of rationality.

And yet, it is that very irrationality, which gives the gospel its greatest defense.

For only God could love like that.

The discussion forces us to see Jesus as we have not seen Him before.

Bloodstained royalty. A God with tears. A creator with a heart.

God became earth's mockery to save his children.

How absurd to think that such nobility, would go to such poverty,

 to share such a treasure, with such thankless people.

But He did.

Jesus was in the temple, sitting among the teachers,

 listening to them and asking them questions

All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents found him they were astonished.

He said to them:

“Did you not know I must be in my Father's house, doing His will?”

Jesus knew who He was, and what He needed to do.

Our reading from Colossians reminds us who we are,

 and how we are to live as God's people.

We are holy, and loved, and forgiven.

We are to clothe ourselves with

 compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

We are to forgive each other as Jesus has forgiven us.

Above all,

 we are to clothe ourselves with love

 because it binds us together in harmony.

And whatever we do, in word or deed,

 we ought to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,

 giving thanks to God the Father through him.

AMEN