**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 12-24-2023 (AM Service)
Essentials of the Faith #3 – The God Man Part 1**

In our sermon series exploring the essentials of the Christian faith, we have highlighted two essentials thus far. The first was the authority of Scripture. The Bible that God has given us is a uniquely inspired Book and is to be treasured and sought to be understood and submitted to. One way that we show our love towards God and our submission to following His Son, Jesus Christ, is by recognizing the unique authority God has given to His written Word and then to seek His Word in our daily living.

The second essential is that God is our Creator and we are made in His image. This reminds us that we are God’s idea and we are His. We are not to live our lives in a selfish way, with us at the center, but instead, we are to seek to live with God at the center of our life. We are to live for His glory and to bless Him. For we are His and we bear His image best as we seek to live for Him.

And today, on this Christmas Eve morning, we now turn to the third essential of the Christian faith. **And this essential is the unique birth and life of Jesus Christ.**

Everything in the Bible is either pointing ahead in some way or pointing back in some way to Jesus Christ. In fact, understanding and following Jesus is so essential that tonight we will focus on Jesus again, but from a different angle, as we will focus on His suffering and death on our behalf.

But today, on the day before Christmas, we especially remember that Jesus is the God-Man and He came to earth in a humble way.

As you read the Bible, we understand that Jesus has always existed. He has always been God alongside the other two Persons of the Godhead – God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus was at work in the Old Testament, before He was given the Name of Jesus. Scripture tells us that Jesus is the Creator. He made all things by the power of the Holy Spirit as according to the will of God the Father.

And Jesus was at work on numerous occasions through the Old Testament period, often appearing in the form of the Angel or Messager of the Lord. He would be the physical embodiment of the unseen God.

And as you read the pages of Scripture, it becomes very clear that at some point or another, there would be a divine yet also human King that would arrive. As the centuries processed, the drumbeat of the arrival of this divine King became louder and louder. This King would be one of a kind. He would be fully human, of the tribe of Judah and descended from the line of King David. But this King would also be fully God. He would be called the Son of Man and He would be worshipped as deity just as much as God is to be worshipped.

This God Man would come to save and rescue Israel and rule forever and ever. And this Being would also be a light to the Gentiles, so that they would turn to the God of Israel and find true life and eternal life.

And finally, at just the right time, this God Man would arrive. Let us now hear from Luke’s account of a portion of this amazing event. We will be in Luke 1:26-38:

**26In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

**29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”**

**35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-38&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24929a)**] the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”**

**38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

What I scene. What a surprise. Yes, it was prophesied hundreds of years earlier by Isaiah the prophet. But Mary and Joseph were peasants. Although Joseph was related to King David, that was a thousand years earlier. And they lived in Nazareth of all places. This is a town that is not even mentioned in the Old Testament. Nothing of larger significance seemed to have ever happened there.

But God sends Gabriel, one of his heavenly messengers, to Nazareth and to Mary. Mary, is understandably confused by this announcement, but she chooses to trust God and surrender to His will.

Mary would have likely been somewhere between 13-15 years old when she received this news from Gabriel. As was the custom of the day, she was already betrothed to Joseph. Betrothal was like being engaged, but far more binding. In fact, in order to break off a betrothal, there would have to be a divorce.

And it was during this betrothal period, which is usually a little less than a year, that Gabriel visits Mary and is given this news.

Certainly, Mary knew that Joseph would struggle to believe what happened to her, that despite her being pregnant, Mary was faithful to Joseph. In time, God would make it clear to Joseph that Mary was telling the truth. Joseph and Mary then travel about 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of a census that was being done.

As Jesus was being born, Joseph could not find a guest room for them and she had to give birth out with the animals in a cave or a barn. Just one incredible and surprising detail after another. But the King indeed had come. And so we celebrate His birth at Christmas.

One thing that became clear that first Christmas is that this God Man, this divine King, would be a humble King. He wasn’t born in a palace. His parents were not wealthy. In fact, Mary & Joseph would carry a stigma of their pregnancy of Jesus being an illegitimate one. They would be outcastes in their own town.

So we have this highly unique birth of Jesus. Born of a virgin. Born of deity and yet fully human as well. Theologians refer to this as Jesus’ hypostatic union – that Jesus is One Person having two natures --- fully human and fully divine, fully God.

And this God-Man grew from a baby to toddler to a little boy to a young adult. It wasn’t until He was about 30 that He began His public ministry.

On the outside, Jesus did not appear as anyone special or kingly. Scripture seems to indicate that He was particularly handsome in appearance. And to most people, Jesus appeared as a simple, ordinary, Jewish peasant.

But despite His modest and rather normal appearance, this Jesus, this God Man also carried unequalled authority. He taught with authority. This means that when He taught He didn’t just quote what various rabbis had to say on different subjects. Instead, He spoke as if the buck stopped with Him. And this is because His words were the words of God.

Jesus demonstrated authority not just in His teaching, but also in forgiving sins, something that only God can do in the fullest sense. And we read of Jesus doing this on multiple occasions.

Additionally, we see Jesus walking in authority over nature – turning water into wine, multiplying bread and fish in order to feed thousands of people, walking on water. By the power of His spoken words, storms would cease and the sea would instantly be made calm.

We also see Jesus’ authority in healing people from all different ailments. Each of the physical bodies that Jesus healed reminds us that Jesus alone can heal the soul. Jesus alone can set people free from the power of sin.

And finally we see Jesus walking in authority over Satan and his demons. These evil beings were no match to Jesus. Jesus would just say the word and these evil beings had to go. In the same way that a 3rd grade teacher would tell her students to put down their pencils and they would instantly do so, Jesus demonstrates His power and authority over the forces of darkness.

What would soon become clear in the life and ministry of Jesus is what people would be divided over and what to make of Him. When Mary & Joseph took the infant Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised, a godly man named Simeon told Mary, **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.”**

In other words, Simeon was telling them that even though Jesus came for everyone, His life and ministry would also cause a division. Some people would respond well to Jesus and others would speak against Him. And what Jesus would say and do would reveal the thoughts of many hearts. In other words, people’s responses to Jesus would reveal if they were truly pursuing God or not.

A big example of this was how the Jewish religious leaders at the time largely responded negatively to Jesus. They were envious of Jesus. While the crowds were captivated by Jesus, many of the religious leaders were jealous that people were more interested in Jesus than in them. Their hypocrisy was being revealed and it was causing them to miss God’s visitation among them.

Finally, Jesus made many claims about Himself. He understood that He was the Messiah. He did not deny that He was God in the flesh and one with God the Father. He made it very clear that following or rejecting God was integrally connected to following or rejecting Him. He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. And by believing in Him, all are invited to enter into abundant and eternal life.

So this morning, as we process the essential of the unique birth and life and ministry of Jesus, what are we to take with us today?

And I believe the most important thing to remember is that His birth and His life drew a line in the sand and we must choose for Him or against Him. His claims about Himself and His actions do not give us any other options.

Many times people today just dismiss Jesus as just a good teacher or a nice guy. But these are foolish ideas. Jesus does not give us these options.

Taking His claims and considering His actions, there are only 4 real options on how people are to respond to Jesus. He is either a liar, a lunatic, a legend, or He is Lord. I will offer a short response to each of these views.

The first is that Jesus was a liar. Certainly, there have been numerous religious figures that have turned out to be simply telling lies in order to make a name for themselves or try to bring them money or be viewed as successful. Was this what Jesus was doing?

For many reasons, this possibility does not seem likely at all. One reason is that liars usually come clean under pressure. And Jesus, even when on trial and on the cross, He continues to speak with clarity and truth and does not confess to lying in any way. Another reason is that liars lie because it benefits them in some way, usually in order to gain power or money or for sexual exploits. But we see none of this in Jesus. In fact, Jesus’ claims only resulted in negative consequences for Himself throughout His ministry. Rejection, ridicule, crucifixion.

And finally, liars do not typically support the marginalized, as Jesus consistently did. Liars like to take advantage of the marginalized.

With all this in mind, I think the claim that Jesus was a liar is patently untrue.

The second argument is that Jesus was a lunatic. In other words, He was crazy and out of His mind. Marcus Borg, a New Testament sceptic, wrote: “What would we think of a person who solemnly said about himself, ‘I am the light of the world’ or “Whoever has seen me has seen God”? …As self-statement, these are highly problematic. Indeed, we have categories of psychological diagnosis for people who talk like this about themselves.”

While it is true that you might be able to find people in psychiatric wards who claim to be various leaders or even God Himself, what we have in Jesus is very different.

But what are some reasons that Jesus wasn’t crazy? One of the most powerful reasons is that New Testament writers do not hide the fact that some people did think that He was crazy. These writers had such confidence in Jesus’ character – His words and actions – that they knew that this accusation was simply not accurate.

In fact, the gospels goes as far to say some of Jesus’ own family seemed to think that He had lost His mind. We are told that his own brothers did not believe in Him. In fact, it actually wasn’t until after Jesus’ resurrection that His brother James came to believe in Him. James saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion and he would become one of the leaders in the early church.

Additionally, insane people do not speak with the wisdom and the moral clarity with which Jesus spoke. Rather than being out of His mind, Jesus’ mind was completely sound and His heart pure.

For nearly 2,000 years, people’s lives have been transformed by the power of the words of Jesus. Hearts and minds and lives have been incredibly transformed. And those turning to the Lord have come into soundness of mind. So this option of lunacy is found wanting as well.

The third option is that Jesus is a legend. This would be that Jesus didn’t really make these lofty claims about Himself, but the early church turned Jesus into a legend. This would be kind of like those fish stories that the size of the fish gets bigger with each telling. But does this theory have any weight?

The short answer is that it does not. There are many reasons for this.

**First, the gospels and the Book of Acts were very clearly written as historical accounts**. There are a great many details that demonstrate that Jesus was not a legend, but a real Person that came and did real things in real time and space.

In fact, over the last couple of centuries, archaeology and modern science has only confirmed, rather than denied, what is written about in Scripture. For those of us that went to the *Museum of the Bible* in Washington DC this summer, you were shown many examples of this in the different artifacts. Science is only proving not only the New Testament as true and trust worthy, but the Old Testament as well.

**Second, the four gospels were all written within a generation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Their early dating would prohibit legends to be developed**. In contrast, the earliest biographies of Emperor Tiberius were 70-80 years after his death and the earliest biography of Alexander the Great were about 450 years after his death. This was not the case with Jesus. The gospels and all the New Testament for that matter, were written during the age of disproof. There were many living witnesses that could call foul on any legendary claims that would have been made.

Third and finally, there were non-Christian writers that understood Jesus’ claim to be deity. They certainly didn’t see Jesus as a legend. So clearly, in light of these reasons, the Jesus we read about in Scripture is not a legend.

This, friends, leaves us only 1 other option. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the God Man. Jesus is the savior of the world. Jesus is the one who came to us as a humble child born of the virgin Mary. Jesus is fully man and fully God. We must chose to freely surrender to Him as our good and love the Lord and King.

Tonight, at our Candle Light worship, we will continue to look at Jesus, this God Man, but instead of highlighting his unique birth and life, we will highlight His suffering and death and why belief is in Passion for us is an essential of the Christian faith.

Let us pray…

Resources: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://stories.gordon.edu/5-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-christmas-story/>

<https://www.evidenceunseen.com/theology/lord-liar-lunatic-or-legend/>

Dr. Buckwalter – Evangelical Seminary – analogy on Jesus being like a 3rd grade teaching