

Christmas Eve, 4 PM
December 24, 2017
Sunday
Luke 2: 7; "It's a Boy"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merry Christmas

(Pause to wait for them to respond)

The text which forms the basis for my message this evening is taken from the Gospel according to St. Luke, the 2nd chapter, beginning at the 1st verse:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,^[b] who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.^[c]

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

This afternoon... this evening we celebrate, a child is born!

Mary had a baby and the baby is a boy!

I have been privileged to be with quite a few families at the birth of their children. When God blesses us with the miracle of birth, there are often times there are three questions that are asked:

First: Is it a boy or a girl?
Second: How is the mother doing?
Third: Is the baby healthy?

St. Luke answers these basic questions concerning Jesus' birth in the Gospel for today. Let's take a moment to reflect on each of these questions.

I. **The first question: Is it a boy or a girl?**

Luke 1: 7 reads: **"And she gave birth to her firstborn son!"**

It's a boy!

More than that, he is a human baby boy!

We call Christmas -- the Nativity of our Lord.

For the Gospel of St. John reads: *The Word became flesh.*

God himself became a human being. He is one of us!

To help us understand the reason why this had to be the Son of God, let's journey over to the basketball court for a moment.

For instance, when Gregg Marshall, the well respected coach of the Wichita State University Basketball team... wants to send a substitute player into the game... he looks to the WSU bench.

He does not send a player in from WSU's arch nemesis...the University of Kentucky into the game to play for the Shockers of WSU. He sends in the ... real thing. He sends in a bonafide WSU Shocker.

It is the same way with God the Father.

When God needed a substitute to die for our sins, he sent neither

- a lamb,
- nor a mountain lion.
- He didn't send an Abraham or a Moses... or another human being.
- Only the perfect son of God could be our substitute
- And ... His name is Jesus!

II. Which brings us to the second question that is often asked at the birth of a child: How is the Mother doing? Mother Mary is doing fine.

In Luke 2, verse 19 we read:

19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."

Jesus was born into a human family.

Like you and me, Jesus had a mother and an earthly father. Mary and Joseph.

- He knows from firsthand experience what it is to have parents who do not completely understand him.
- He knows from firsthand experience what it is to have family discussions.
- Mother Mary had to be healthy to give Jesus a normal human family.
- She and Joseph were there to teach him basic Jewish family values.

- Mother Mary is doing fine, thank you for asking.

But about 30 years later Mary's heart did not feel fine.

For the heart of Mary broke when she saw her son, Jesus... crucified.

Yet, her heart found its comfort in the knowledge that this was all part of God's plan to save us from our sins.

Mother Mary is doing fine.

**III. Which brings us to the third question that is often asked when a child is born... and that question is:
Is the baby healthy?**

Yes, Baby Jesus is healthy.

The last part of Luke 2, verse 7 reads:

Mary “**wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**”

He had to be healthy.

Look at what he faced as he grew up:

- less than two years after his birth, he and his parents became nighttime fugitives. They fled to Egypt to get Jesus away from the killing hands of King Herod. This was not an easy journey for the Holy Family. The Gaza strip was not safe for the fleeing Holy Family.
- Jesus also had to be healthy because life as the son of a carpenter in the hills of Nazareth was as hard as life is on a farm growing up in the wheat fields of Kansas.
- Jesus had to be healthy because during His public ministry our Lord Jesus spent weeks alone in the desert.

He served in a preaching and teaching ministry on the road.

All this is hard work.

And, at the last, during Holy Week...our Lord's body and spirit received

- the mocking of crowds,
- the agony in the garden,
- the beatings,

Christmas Eve, 2017, 4 PM, Sunday; Page 4

- the scourging, the thorns, and the cross.
- Only a strong and healthy body could carry all this for us.

Baby Jesus is healthy.

He grew up to be a strong and healthy man.

He lived perfectly for us.

He died perfectly for us.

And what about God the Father. We know how God the Father felt about His Son. In Matthew 3:17 at the Baptism of our Lord, God the Father said: **a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased."**

It is as though the Father was saying, **"It's a boy! I am so proud of what he is doing. I shall raise him from the dead."**

Today part of our world says: **"Ho! Ho! Ho!"**

Another part of the world says: **"Bah! Humbug!"**

You and I have a different message to share: **"Look in the manger! It's a healthy baby boy! Jesus has come to save us from our sins!"**

As you and I join around our Lord's Altar this evening to receive His holy body and His precious blood... may we be fed with the forgiveness that the Christ alone can bring.

And as we gather with family members and friends to celebrate the joys of Christmas Day... may we lift up our thoughts to the heavens and say:

Thank you God for the gift of your Son, My Savior, Jesus Christ."

Merry Christmas

(Pause to wait for them to respond ... then try it again)

Very good!

Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Nicene Creed.