

Christmas 2019
The Incarnation – God Becoming Man, Jesus Born as a Babe
Philippians 2:5-11

This morning we are going to take a look at a few of the things about the birth of Jesus. As you can see from your outline I have entitled this sermon the incarnation which means God becoming man, Jesus, born as a babe.

We celebrate Jesus being born because it shows the love God and Jesus has for us for we know the birth of Jesus is the beginning of His journey to the cross. And for those who accept it, the cross of Jesus means salvation. It means we are free from the wrath of God and we get to spend eternity in heaven. It means we are set free from the cords of sin in this life so we can live freely in God's kingdom during our stay on earth.

We think of Christmas in this light but I wanted us to consider this morning what Jesus gave up to come to earth and go to the cross.

Before we get into this teaching I wanted to ask, have you ever been in a great spot in life, a place where you experienced the most peace, refreshment and joy? All things seemed to be in focus, in balance and there wasn't a worry or a need you had in that moment.

Do you remember how difficult it was to leave that place? Knowing that you were once again going to step into the fray of life with all of its challenges and demands. I bet you have.

I know when Michal and I lived in the flatlands of Oklahoma and Kansas was of the saddest sights we experienced was when we saw the mountains in our rear view mirror, knowing we might not see them for another year. We so enjoyed the peace and tranquility of the mountains that we hated to leave.

Isn't it true that our hearts long to live permanently in a place like this? A place of peace, a place of no worries, no demands, no pain, no arguments. Well, there is a place like this and it is called what? Heaven.

Revelation 21:1, 3-4, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first passed away...behold, the temple of God is among the people and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people...and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain; the first things have passed away."

This is what we long for isn't it. When all that is heaven comes to earth. The glory of God will be all around us. We will be in a perfected state physically and spiritually. We will be able to approach God, approach Jesus and worship them face to face. John tries to put what heaven is like in words but he struggles. It is too grand, too glorious, too beyond what he has experienced on earth.

Think for just a moment, if you can, what it would be like to live in this place. The glory of the Lord shining all around you. Angels there to serve you. The love you have for others and the love they have for you is perfect love. Peace...joy, content, perfect.

Now, can you imagine leaving that place? Can you imagine experiencing all the blessings of heaven and then by your own choice, leaving it all behind?

This is what Jesus did. If you remember a few weeks back I spoke, over the course of a couple of weeks, about who Jesus was before the world knew Him as Jesus, before His was born a babe in a manger.

Jesus has always been. He has always been with His Father. He was involved in creation. He was probably the one who interacted with all of the people we read about in the Old Testament. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah and more.

It is very possible that when God showed up on earth it was Jesus. At least that is what most scholars believe and it seems to fit as you study scripture. So it is possible that Jesus walked the earth before He was born in a manger. But He was also walking the streets of heaven. If there were streets in heaven.

I can just imagine Jesus in heaven, moving among the angels in complete love. Even though He was over them as their Lord, I can picture Him moving about them, blessing them, reaching out and touching them and loving on them. Even though the angels were there to serve Him Jesus had already learned to be a leader was to serve.

I can imagine that Jesus was also interacting with all those who died and were in His presence. Paul said to be free from the human body was to be with Christ. And we know that when Jesus was up on the mountain with Peter, James and John and He was transformed into a heavenly being of sort, He was talking with Moses and Elijah. They made an appearance on earth and I bet, and some scholars tend to think, they were talking about the mission Jesus was on. In fact, I wonder if it was an extension of conversations they were having in heaven before Jesus was born.

So try and picture for a moment with me who Jesus was before He was born in a manger and what life was like in heaven for Him.

Picture who Jesus was before He was born in a manger and what life was like for Him in heaven

Read now our passage. We are going to read this passage in its entirety and then I am going to pull a few things out of it this morning and then after the first of the year, we may take a look at it some more.

Philippians 2:5-11, “5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

There is quite a bit in this passage but lets just take a look at a couple.

First, in verse 6 we read, “...although He existed in the form of God...”

1. Jesus existed in the form of God

I think we have spoke about this quite a bit in the past weeks and again today. Jesus has always been. He is part of the Trinity of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. He was involved in creation for the Bible says that all things were created by Him and for Him.

Not only does all the power of God exist in Jesus, He has the position of being the second part of the Godhead. The Trinity is something that we struggle to fully understand but we know and believe from scripture that Jesus submits to His Father. In fact, just the fact that He called God Father puts Him in a position under God.

But the fact remains that prior to His birth Jesus existed in the form of God in a way that we do not yet understand.

But even though He existed in the form of God,

2. Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped

For me this shows the humility Jesus was operating in. Even though He was part of the Godhead it never occurred to Him to try and seize God's authority unlike a couple of others.

That was Satan's deal wasn't it? He not only wanted to be like God, he wanted God's position and when that didn't work, he tempted Adam and Eve with the same thing. You will be like God if you eat of the apple he told them.

Not Jesus though. He was pure of heart. Content with His position.

In fact, being pure in heart led Him into the third thing we see Jesus did.

3. Jesus **emptied** Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant

I like the way the New International Version puts it. Jesus made Himself nothing. Jesus positioned Himself as a servant of His Father God by emptying Himself out, making Himself nothing. Instead of aspiring to a higher status Jesus He willingly gave up everything He had.

The fact that Jesus was always the Son of God, that He could call upon a legion of angels, that He could have at any point during His stay on earth exited the journey He was on and gone back to His position in heaven is without doubt.

But do you know that Jesus left all of His power as the Son of God in heaven?

Hebrews 2:17 tells us, **Hebrews 2:17, "Therefore, He (Jesus) had to made like His brethren in all things so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God..."**

Even though Jesus was always God during His stay on earth He became fully man. And this feeds into our last point.

4. Jesus took on the likeness of men

As you read this statement I wonder if, like me, you have given this much thought. Jesus took on the likeness of man.

I think we might think about the scripture that says that in every way a man is tempted so was Jesus. We know this to be true during His time in the desert. We think about Jesus as a man of 30 or so years old and what He endured on His way to the cross but let's roll the clock back a ways. Quite a ways.

We are getting ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus in three days. Let's say that our time-line was correct. Jesus was born on December 25th year 0.

If that is the case that means 2,019 years ago Jesus was where? Still in Mary's womb right? In fact, He had been there for almost nine months give or take a few days.

Do you think during His time in the womb Jesus had any conception of who He was? Or, do you think that Jesus, after His birth, when He was in the manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, already had some understanding of what His mission was? How about when His family presented Him at the temple or when the wise men came to visit or when His family was fleeing with Him to Egypt to escape the atrocities of Herod when he killed all the babies born in Bethlehem two years old and younger.

Did Jesus have an idea of who He was and what His life was going to be all about? I know I am stretching things a bit but I cannot see that He would.

That Jesus was unique as a small child I have no doubt but if He was going to be made like His brethren in all things, if, as in our main passage this morning says, He was created in the likeness of men, that means that Jesus was like any other child that was born.

From conception to birth He spent nine months in His mother's womb not really thinking about anything. After He was born He would cry when He was hungry and connect to His mother's breast to be fed. He had to be changed when He soiled His diaper. He had to be bathed by His mother. And on and on it goes.

I wanted us to think about this because Jesus, before He was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb, Jesus had been looking down on mankind over thousands of years. Watching men and women being conceived and born. He knew partially of what it would mean for Him to come to earth in this way. What did Jesus give up?

How about His dignity? Probably the most humbling aspect of Jesus' appearance on earth as a full human being is that He gave up His dignity.

5. Jesus gave up His dignity

Definition - dignity: majesty, self-esteem, pride

In the heavenly realms Jesus was all-loved, all-worshipped and all-respected. However, on earth Jesus intentionally put Himself into the hands of His own creation.

Born into a borrowed feed trough in a borrowed stable, He gave up the trappings and furnishings of God. Then, as a child like us, Jesus submitted to an earthly mother who had to change His diapers, feed Him and be under her and Joseph's authority.

He had to submit Himself to His teachers, to the Roman soldiers, to the government and then finally to the whims of the religious leaders of His day which led Him to the cross.

Someone once said:

Love isn't defined by what we give, but by what we give up

During the next few days most of us will be bustling to get ready for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and all the expectations of family, friends and celebrations.

However, as we ready ourselves for Christmas, might it be a good thing for us to offer up a word of thanks to Jesus for voluntarily giving up so much of Himself so that we might enter into His kingdom and His salvation for eternity.

Jesus emptied Himself out and came that we might enter into a place where the temple of God is among us, where He dwells among us, where we shall be His people. A place where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain.

Jesus emptied Himself out, became human that we might dwell with Him forever.

This is Christmas and this is why we celebrate the Christ-child.

Amen!

Let's pray