

In the Name of Jesus

2nd Sunday in Advent – December 8, 2019

Sermon Text: Luke 2:4-7 – The Message of Advent Is “Come”
OUR SAVIOR RESPONDS: “I COME”

Scripture Readings: Malachi 3:1-4, John 1:1-17

Hymns: 73, 62 (4), 61, 64, 705 (*Worship Supplement*)

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

In the name of Jesus, our coming Redeemer-King, dear friends:

This year the theme for our four December Advent Sundays is: *The message of Advent is “COME.”* Last week we considered this main thought ... that the Lord, in His grace, has worked in the hearts of His people of every period of world history a longing for Him to come and satisfy their soul’s need ... a longing that prompted them to cry out: **“O LORD, COME!”** We also noted that the Lord blessed His waiting saints of Old Testament times with a steadfast trust that He would indeed come and pour out on them all the blessings of His grace in the future Messiah. They had no doubt about this!

We might wonder what the Lord did to work in His Old Testament believers a faith that was so stellar and sure. This morning we’ll consider that He did this through the promises He gave to them down through those Old Testament years. He came to them, time and again, with words of assurance designed to deepen their trust and increase their joy in the Gospel blessings their future Messiah would bring to them.

As we recall these prophecies this morning, may it impress on us how the story of the coming of Jesus to our world at the first Christmas, which we love to give our attention to at this season of the year, is not (as the foolish world thinks) just a cute little story conceived in the minds of men (on the order of a fairytale or myth). It’s the factual story of *real* people with *real* spiritual needs that were met by the appearance of a *real* Savior to deliver His people from *real* sins so that He might lead them to a *real* heaven. As we hear this “greatest story ever told” may we be encouraged to rejoice in all the Lord accomplished *for us* (and what He will do *for us* in the future). May our Advent meditation serve the good purpose of sharpening our memories with regard to God’s marvelous deeds of the past and encourage us to look ahead to the marvelous thing He will do for us in the future on the Day of His Second Advent.

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Let us begin at the dawn of time (four thousand years before the first Christmas). Our first parents, Adam and Eve, have just fallen into sin by eating of the forbidden fruit. No longer are they in a state of pristine holiness as the Lord had fashioned them. No longer do they enjoy a loving relationship with God. No, rather, we find them cowering in the bushes in fear because

they know they are liable for the terrible punishment of eternal misery in hell, for their having offended against the majesty of their loving Creator.

What happens next? You know the story. Their Creator approaches them that He might have a conversation with them about what had happened. The gist of the conversation is that He leads them to know that He does not plan to treat them according to what they deserve for their sin (in anger, turning His back from them forever). Rather, He speaks these words (in their hearing) to the one who had perpetrated the fall into sin, Satan:

- **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel”** (Genesis 3:15).

This Bible verse is called the *Protevangelium* (from the two Greek words: *protos* meaning “first” and *evangelion* meaning “good news”). This was the *first* instance of God announcing the *Good News* that He was intending to send a Deliverer into the sin-cursed world to counteract the devil’s dastardly work. It was to this glorious promise that Adam and Eve, and each succeeding generation of God’s children, clung in faith. People like Enoch ... Methuselah ... Noah. They all rejoiced to know that their God was going to come to them and “set things straight,” to reconcile the world to Himself, to restore fallen man to His holy image and help them regain Paradise Lost.

Two millennia pass on the timeline of history. Around 2000 BC God appears to man living in Ur of the Chaldees whose name was Abram. To this man He says:

- **“Leave your country and your family and travel to a land I’ll show you ... I will bless you and make your name great, Abram ... In you all the families of the earth are going to be blessed”** (Genesis 12:2-3).

The Lord, in effect, was saying: “I’ve chosen you, Abram, to be the ancestor of the Coming One. You and Sarah will have a child from whom will descend the world’s Deliverer.

Six hundred years pass. God repeats His promise to the Israelites in the days of Moses (1400 BC). Interestingly – and remarkably! – He does so through the mouth of a false prophet (of all people)! There was an unbelieving king named Balak, ruler of Moab, who ordered the false prophet, Balaam, to curse the Israelites. Balak, you see, didn’t want the Israelites to prosper. He didn’t want them to make it to the Promised Land safely. He had it in for them. Satan made an attempt to use Balak as his henchman to try to keep the promise of a Savior from being fulfilled. But what happened is that God did not allow Balaam to curse Israel. Instead he had him pronounce a blessing! He had him prophesy the coming of the Savior in these words:

- **“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and [destroy all the enemies of God’s people]”** (Numbers 24:17).

From the days Moses the stream of time flows forward to the time of Isaiah (750 BC). God issues many more promises for His people to hold onto and be comforted by. He tells them:

- Behold, I come as the Offspring of a virgin (7:14).
- I come as the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, to establish My reign of forgiveness in hearts, to rule over a kingdom that will never end (9:6-7).
- I come as a Servant, to be wounded for My people’s transgressions, bruised for their iniquities ... to be stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ... to go as a sheep to the slaughter,

to shed My blood as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (53:4-5).

At this same point in time God predicts (through a contemporary of Isaiah, Micah) the very city where the Messiah was to be born:

- **“Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting”** (Micah 5:2).

100 years pass. Through Jeremiah God announces:

- **“The days come that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King who will reign wisely ... In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”** (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

100 more years pass (we are now at the year 500 BC). God prophesies through Zechariah:

- **“Your King, comes to you; just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey”** (Zechariah 9:9-).

And *finally* the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, speaks this word of comfort to God’s longing people after their return from the Babylonian exile (400 BC):

- **“To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings”** (Malachi 4:2).

We can surely see how God responded to the cries of His longing, waiting, hoping people (“**O Lord, COME!**”) with a plethora of promises, designed to raise their flagging spirits, lift up their sagging hopes, and assure them that what He had planned to do for them already at the time of Adam and Eve would assuredly come to pass in the fullness of time.

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So what message is there in all of this for us, God’s people today? There’s a passage in Paul’s letter to the Romans which says:

- **“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”** (Romans 15:4).

God caused all those words, all those promises, all those prophecies, to be recorded in the Bible for *our* spiritual benefit! To assure us that, in the Messiah who has already come, *our* spiritual needs – which are as real as were the needs of an Adam, an Eve, a Noah, and an Abram – have been provided for. There’s no doubt about this because every single one of the many prophecies given by God throughout the long 4,000 year period of Old Testament history have been fulfilled!

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To further illustrate (and put an explanation point, as it were, on what we have just said) that God’s Son truly did descend from heaven to our world to deliver us ... Christmas truly is the festival of the eternal Word becoming flesh and living for a while among us to win for us the gift of eternal life ... let me share a story (it’s a true story):

Once there was a man named Peter Stoner (chairman of the Department of Mathematics at

Pasadena City College, California, back in the 1940's). He authored a book that was titled *Science Speaks*. In his book Peter Stoner applied the modern science of probability to Old Testament prophecy. After completing his study he was led to the conclusion that the chances of one person fulfilling eight biblical prophecies is one in a hundred quadrillion. That's the number one with seventeen zeros behind it (100,000,000,000,000,000). To give an idea of how big a number that is, Stoner said that if you took a hundred quadrillion silver dollars and placed them facedown on the state of Texas they'd cover the surface of Texas (that's 268,820 square miles!) to a depth of two feet. Then he said that if you marked one silver dollar with a black pen and threw it down somewhere on that gargantuan mountain of coins, and told a blindfolded man to go find it ... his chances of succeeding would be the same as the Old Testament prophets writing eight prophecies and having them all come true in a single person.

Stoner's point? He was saying that since all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament came true in the one Man, Jesus Christ, this had to be a miracle! It corroborates in a most powerful way that Jesus was who Isaiah said He was: Immanuel, the God-man, come from heaven to rescue us. What's even more amazing is that God caused not just eight messianic prophecies to come true in Jesus but dozens! How this confirms for us what we already know to be true as Bible-believing Christians:

This is the Christ, your God and Lord, Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be From all your sins to set you free.

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It's also amazing to think about how our God orchestrated events of world history so that a pagan emperor, Caesar Augustus, issued an decree to have a census taken of the Roman world ... so that a Jewish carpenter would need to lead his pregnant wife on a ninety-mile journey ... so that the Infant Christ would be born in the town of David, as Micah prophesied. Thirty-three years later God orchestrated events *again* so that Jesus would go on a journey to Jerusalem. He would appear in the courtrooms of Caiaphas and Pilate, be led out to Golgotha. His body buried in Joseph's tomb (in answer to prophecy!), from which He would arise (in answer to prophecy!). Now, through faith in the Word made flesh, we have become possessors of the priceless gift of God's forgiveness, a robe of holiness (purchased with Jesus' blood), and a crown of life to look forward to in Paradise regained. Praise be to the Lord!

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So may our prayer of faith be ... in this Advent season ... as we draw ever closer to the happy festival of our Lord's birth:

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell:
Oh, come to us, Abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!
Amen.