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Trinity Lutheran Church
Decatur, Illinois
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“Our Salvation In Jesus Is Totally Mind-Boggling”

Hear the Word of God from Matthew 1,

“An angel of the Lord appeared to (Joseph) in a dream and said, “.....Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, for what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name ‘Jesus’ because He will save His people from their sins.’

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet (Isaiah), ‘The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and they will give him the name ‘Immanuel’ – which means: ‘God With Us’!’”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

The girl you’re engaged to marry tells you that she’s pregnant, and you both know that the baby can’t possibly be yours. Why? You have both honored God with your body, and have saved sex for marriage; rather than trying to see how many people you can become one flesh with.

But if that’s not bad enough, your betrothed tells you that even though she’s pregnant, she’s still a virgin. Wait a minute! Virgins don’t conceive. Joseph didn’t need a degree in biology to know that. Joseph knows they haven’t been intimate, which means that Mary must have been unfaithful, and now she’s lying about it.

Finally, the one you’re engaged to marry, and wanted to have a family with, tells you that the baby in her womb got there by the Spirit of God. At this point, you don’t just feel betrayed, but a feeling of fright now comes upon you, that the one you love has lost her mind.

Scandalous! Shameful! Delusional Joseph shoots off a text message to his lawyer to begin drawing up the divorce papers.

No doubt Mary tried to reason with Joseph, “*Joseph, I’ve always been faithful to you. I have not sinned with God’s gift of sex. I have been saving it for you, my husband, on our wedding day. You’ve got to believe me!*” But she’s getting nowhere with Joseph, so the Lord has to take matters into His own hands:

“An angel of the Lord appeared to (Joseph) in a dream and said, “.....Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, for what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

When the infinite God decides to become finite, our brains are thrown into disarray. When the Son of God takes on flesh, all of our tidy little categories are challenged. The kind of ‘gods’ we make for ourselves are little puppy dog ‘gods’, that we can put on a leash, and get them to do little tricks for us as we command. But when an infinite God has the audacity to conceive Himself in the womb of a virgin human being, and make Himself human, so that He is qualified to bleed and die for our sins; then all bets are off as to whether or not we’ll believe in Him too!

Look at the trouble that God goes to, to save us. He saw our needs, and He forgot about His own needs. He saw our hurts, and He forgot about His own hurts. God changed His whole mode of existence for us and our salvation. He went from being only a Divine Spirit, to being both God and Man/Spirit and Flesh, in the person of Christ, so that He could bleed and die, in payment to God, the debt that we owed. Luther says, “This is so amazing that we should burst into a 1000 pieces with joy.”

So how did the one true God become true man? How exactly did God take flesh and blood into the Godhead? For this one, I need you to listen closely: ‘We don’t know.’ You might say, ‘But virgins don’t conceive!’ My answer to that is: “Ordinarily they don’t.’ But the Bible says, “***Nothing is impossible with God.***” There comes a point where you need to realize that God is bigger, stronger, and wiser than you are, and you need to hold your brain captive to what God tells you is the truth.

True! You and I can't understand the biology of the incarnation, but we don't need to understand the mechanics of how it happened. God just asks us to take Him at His Word that it did happen for our salvation. We let God tell us what He has done to save us, rather than we telling Him what He can or cannot do, refusing to believe anything that doesn't fit inside our brains. Any 'god' who can fit inside of my brain ain't God; and any 'god' who can fit inside of your brain definitely ain't God.

All we need to know is 'what' the Lord has done to save us, and He tells us, "***The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; so the Holy One to be born to you will be called the Son of God.***" And then the angel said to Joseph, "***She will give birth to a son, and you are to call His name 'Jesus', because He will save His people from their sins.***" Folks, you don't have to understand the biology of the incarnation to be forgiven. You simply take God at His word that you ARE FORGIVEN in the conception, birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus; even if your brain can't figure out how God pulled it off. That's where 'awe', 'pondering', and 'believing' come in, as Mary did in her heart.

Luther is probably as close to anyone when he says, "***Mary became pregnant thru her ear canal, and not her uterus.***" Just as God said to the blind, 'see', and they saw; to the deaf, 'hear', and they heard; to the paralyzed, 'walk', and they walked; and to the dead, 'come back to life', and they came back to life; so God spoke the Word, "***You will be with child....and your child will be the Son of God.***" And at God's speaking, Christ was implanted into Mary's uterus through her ear canal. And, in a sense, isn't that how we come to faith? We receive the Word of God, and the Word conceives faith in us, and makes our hearts to be a manger for Christ.

No! Jesus wasn't conceived in the normal human way. And thank God He wasn't. The Bible says that everyone who is conceived in the normal human way, with an earthly father, is conceived and born in sin – Psalm 51:5. Had Jesus been conceived by an earthly father, He couldn't be our Savior, because He would be a sinner Himself, like we are, whether we admit it or not. You and I are sinful 'racially', and by that we mean that the whole human race is infected with the deadly, incurable, communicable disease of sin. And we are all sinful genetically. That is, down to our very genes we are all conceived with the congenital disease called 'sin'. **Page 3**

We needed nothing less than a perfect God to conceive His Son in a miraculous, or an ‘out-of-the-ordinary’ way, so that He could be our sinless substitute.

Now the big question is: ‘How is Jesus’ sinless conception News That We Can Use?’

First of all, Jesus’ sinless conception means that Jesus passed thru every stage of our existence without sin, so that no one, at any stage of existence – conception, in utero, infancy, toddlerhood, tween, teen, adult – could ever say, I have no hope of ever being righteous before God. Jesus was perfect for you. He’s your straight ‘A’ report card. You’re on the ‘nice’ list, because you’re covered with the perfect righteousness of Jesus. Everyone who confesses: “I have no righteousness of my own”, but believes God’s promise: “*But Jesus was righteous for me,*” is given Jesus’ ‘womb-to-tomb’ righteousness; so that when God looks at you, He sees the very righteousness of His perfect Son. And just as God received Jesus back into heaven, He now has to, and will, receive you into heaven; because through faith, you are now as righteous as Jesus. And if God doesn’t let you, who believe in Jesus, into heaven, then He’s got to kick Christ out of heaven – which He will not do – because you now have the same righteousness as Jesus Himself, through faith. It is a gifted righteousness. That’s the first thing that Jesus’ sinless conception means.

Secondly, Jesus’ sinless conception (followed by His sinless life) is also News That We Can Use, because it means that Jesus is now qualified to bleed and die, because He has flesh and blood; but even more importantly, He is now qualified to bleed and die for others, because He has no sin of His own for which He must die. It has been said, “*Since our sin was an infinite sin and infinite sin demands infinite penalty (which is hell); therefore, what is necessary is that either we must suffer infinitely, or an infinite person be found to suffer for us.*” Furthermore, since Jesus is also true God, He’s also qualified to give the world a ‘God-sized’ death that is big enough for everyone. As a result, the angel says to Joseph, “***And you shall give Him the Name ‘Jesus’, because He will save His people from their sins.***”

And finally, how is Jesus’ sinless conception ‘News That We Can Use’? The Bible says, “***All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said thru the prophet Isaiah, ‘The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and they will give Him the Name “Immanuel” – which means: “God With Us”!’***” Page 4

He is with us: to be our righteousness before God. He is with us: to have all of our sins laid on Him. He is with us: to bleed and die, in payment to God, for our sins. He is with us: to take our place in hell. He is with us: to turn our grave into a bed. He is with us: to turn our tomb into a tunnel. He is with us in Baptism: to birth us with new life through water and the Word. He is with us, with the power of His Spirit: to empower us to: *'put to death the deeds of our flesh'*. And He is with us to give us new life through the *'deeds of His flesh'*.

Just as Jesus' incarnation in the womb inconvenienced Mary and Joseph, and turned their whole world upside-down, and inside-out; but once it happened they didn't want it any other way, for they had received God's salvation; so Jesus' incarnation will inconvenience you, and turn your life upside-down and inside-out. Your Baptism is the death of the sinner in you by God's decree. Let it die! Give it a nice funeral. Nail another nail in its coffin every day, as you repent of your sin, and as you remind your sinful flesh that it died when Jesus died, and that it was buried with Christ when He was buried. But even better, your Baptism is having new life, and the life of Christ conceived in you through the power of the Holy Spirit. God's angel could just as well say to us: *"What is conceived in you – the entrance of Christ bringing His life into our lives – is also of the Holy Spirit."* Baptism brings the enfleshed Savior into our lives. When you were baptized, God conceived faith in you. In Baptism, God told us personally, Jesus is your Immanuel – God with you, in the womb, in the crib, in the world, on the cross, in the grave, in the resurrection, at the font, in the Word, in the bread, and in the wine, all of that to forgive you!

Our text says, *"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him to do, and he took Mary home as his wife; but had no union with her, until the child was born."* A virgin actually did conceive and bear a Son, to be your Savior. Her Son actually lived, died, and rose again for your salvation. And you, simply taking God at His Word, simply trusting like faithful Joseph, will actually live forever. Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the one true faith unto life everlasting. Amen.

