

IV. Advent in Biblical Perspective
Life Portraits from the Nativity
“The Word of God and the Spirit of God”
Matthew 1, 2; Luke 1, 2
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December 22, 2019 • Morning Sermon

God’s Word is inerrant, infallible and the truth. Matthew 1:18–25 says [18] *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is **from the Holy Spirit**. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” [22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

[23] *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”*

(which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

As I was thinking about this Advent series I was led to those who would attend the birth of Christ and then present them to you with Biblical sketches/portraits of their life. I have used couplets in this series with the first being Gabriel and the angels, then Mary and Joseph and in the last study the shepherds and the wise men. Two people that will eventually be touched by the birth of Jesus will be Simeon and Anna and in the next study we’ll look at Jesus, Emmanuel. These are the ones that our powers of observation quickly see at the birth of Jesus but perhaps the most important couplet of the attendees and like the rest become attendants to the birth of Christ are not quite so apparent. That is the Word of God and the Spirit of God at the birth of Jesus.

So why would I say these two are the most neglected but the most important? There are three reasons for the Word of God being the most important at the nativity. The first reason is no one would come to the birth of Jesus unless the Word of God had brought them, had gotten to them first. Mary was visited by an angel with the Word of God. Joseph was visited by an angel with the Word of God. The shepherds were visited by an angel and then a host of angels in the field with the declaration of “I bring you Good News of great joy for all people born unto you this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.” This is also the Word of God that goes to the shepherds. The Word of God goes all the way to the East as Numbers 24:17 brings wise men all the way to Jerusalem and then the Word of God by Herod’s counselors is given to them to tell them to continue to Bethlehem to find Jesus.

The second reason the Word of God is the most important at the nativity is that no one will know the significance of the birth of Jesus without the Word of God revealing it to them. There is a Baby in a cattle trough wrapped in swaddling cloths here in this stall with no room in the upper room of the guest house. There was not a neon sign pointing this out here. No one

would know the significance of there being born to us the Savior who is Christ the King. This is the King who has come to die to save His people from their sins. No one would know that birth was headed for a cross. What wood was around that stall that would be a statement that would framed into a cross that this Baby would go and take hold of to save us from all of our sins for all of eternity as He becomes our offering and this would not be known without the Word of God.

Without the Word of God one would never go to it. Without the Word of God one would not know what was happening there. The third reason is amazingly the Word of God has been telling us about this birth and what it was going to do for hundreds of years. We say each year of the lighting of the prophecy candle that there are 60 plus specific prophecies that are fulfilled from the Old Testament in the life and ministry of Christ and I'm not referring to types, symbols or narrative anticipations of Christ, which are all fulfilled in Christ. There are 20 prophecies in Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke that are affirmed. Matthew in particular is fascinated by the fulfillment of prophecies as he articulates one after another after another. From the 20 prophecies 12 come from the Old Testament and 8 of them are given in Luke 1, 2, Matthew 1 and 2 that are fulfilled in Christ in Luke and Matthew.

God's Word is true! Every word of God is given by God is inspired, inerrant, infallible and is unbreakable. Not one jot or tittle shall pass away until all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). God's Word doesn't contain truth or magically become truth. God's Word is true. *[17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth* (John 17:17). Not only do we have the 20 prophecies that have been fulfilled but there are also other words of Jesus that true. Jesus said in John 6:47, *[47] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.* That's the truth. Do you believe in Him?

Romans 8:1 says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Ephesians 2:8-9 says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Hebrews 9:27 says *[27] And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* You're only hope in that judgement is Jesus Christ and all of this is the truth! John 14:6 says *[6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* God's Word is the truth. God's Word stand fulfilled in His first Advent and what has yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled by His Second Advent.

So what about these 12 prophecies? We are told the virgin is going to give birth and Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled. That is also what the angel told Joseph. The Baby Mary has within her has been conceived of by the Holy Spirit so the virgin birth is fulfilled and Joseph is called to participate in that as the Divinely adopted father and Mary is the Divinely appointed mother. There were four steps to a marriage – consent, commitment, ceremony and consummation. They were already through consent and commitment and then he finds out Mary is with child. The angel tells him not to fear to take Mary as his wife for He knew that Joseph was thinking someone had either done something to her against her will or she has been immoral. Being a just man who loved her he had planned to divorce her privately but after hearing from the angel Joseph knew this was of the Lord and she was going to be the Divinely appointed mother of this child conceived by the Holy Spirit. So Joseph went ahead with the ceremony but kept her a virgin until she gave birth.

Another prophecy was that His name shall be Emmanuel which is also prophesied in Isaiah and is fulfilled in the naming of the Child. It is prophesied that the Messiah would be of the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah and the son of David. We see this fulfilled in the genealogies in Matthew 1 of Joseph's side and Luke 3 being Mary's side. The book of Micah

tells us He will be born in Bethlehem, David's royal city as the wise men are informed. When Mary and Joseph go into Egypt and back it will fulfill the prophecy in Jeremiah that tells us the Deliverer shall come out of Egypt, just as the people of God were brought out of Egypt in the Exodus, the Redeemer will be brought out of Egypt. He would be called a Nazarene for He would be raised in Nazareth.

Then the genocide of Herod which was revealed in the book of Jeremiah is fulfilled in Matthew 2:18. Then there is the glory of God where the Word becomes flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory which is the prophecy of the Messiah in Psalm 148. We began with the declaration to Zachariah by the angel that he and his wife in their old age had been selected by the sovereign hand of God for the supernatural intervention of giving birth. They would give birth to John the Baptist who was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi. John the Baptist is the fulfillment of coming in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the Messiah. Then we see the prophecy from Numbers 24:17 that His star would rise and so His star has risen and leads the wise men to Him.

These are 12 prophecies that are distinctly identified and fulfilled. The Word of God in the Old Testament is true and it points to Jesus but even in the giving of these prophecies are made. There are prophecies to those who are being used to fulfill those prophecies. Zachariah has a prophetic word given to him. He and his wife were barren but was told they would birth a child. Six months before the birth of Jesus they give birth to John the Baptist. This word to Zachariah is fulfilled. The word to Elizabeth that she would bear a child is fulfilled. The word to Joseph and to Mary is fulfilled.

Mary does ask 'how can this be since I have not known a man?' Luke 1:35–38 says [35] *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God."* [38] *And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; **let it be to me according to your word.**"* And the angel departed from her.

The filling of John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit is fulfilled. John the Baptist is converted in the womb even as the Scriptures prophesy. The shepherds are told to go into Bethlehem to see the Savior of sinners, Jesus Christ. They went and that word was fulfilled as they saw Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloths just as it was told them. Wise men were told they would find the Baby in Bethlehem and that was fulfilled. Simeon was told he would not taste death until he had seen the glory of Israel and that was fulfilled. God's Word is true, let every man be a liar. God's Word stands fulfilled.

Not only is God's Word permeating and penetrating all who are brought to that nativity but also the present of the Spirit of God. I'm going to use select verses from Luke 1 and 2 to point this out due to time. Luke 1:14–15 says concerning the birth of John the Baptist, [14] *And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15] for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be **filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.***

We have already referred to this text but we see more of the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:34–35 which says [34] *And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] And the angel answered her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.**"* Mary will also be filled with the Spirit of God.

Now Luke 1:39–42 says [39] *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, [40] and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. [41] And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby (John the Baptist) leaped in her womb. And **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit**, [42] and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”*

Luke 1:64–67 says [64] *And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. [65] And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, [66] and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him. [67] And his father **Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit** and prophesied, saying.*

The last one I want to show you regarding the Holy Spirit in the nativity is in Luke 2:22–25 which says [22] *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord [23] (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) [24] and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” [25] Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was upon him.***

We see these coming to the nativity because they were brought by the Word of God through the Spirit of God. Do you see how the Bible continues to affirm itself? The Spirit of God works with the Word of God and those are the means by which God works. God works in this world to the preeminence of Christ by the Spirit of God through the Word of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are inseparable, twined together. The Word of God and the Spirit of God is what brings us to the Son of God. These are God’s two means of grace so that we might know Christ and His glory.

The Spirit of God doesn’t stop there at the nativity for the Bible tells us that the Spirit of God was upon Jesus in His childhood. By the Spirit of God Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). Then when Jesus begins His public ministry at age 30 with the required act of baptism it says in Matthew 3:16, 17, [16] *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;** [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”* The first thing the Spirit of God does as He is baptized into His public ministry is He leads Him into the wilderness and is there with Him as He endures temptation for 40 days and 40 nights. After that the Bible says the Spirit of God led Him up to Galilee and He began to teach in all the cities by the Spirit of God.

Hebrews and Romans tell us the Spirit of God compelled Him to the cross to die for our sins. Then the Spirit of God brought Him up out of the grave and emptied the tomb. Then the Spirit of God in all of the Shekinah glory through the clouds received Him back from the Mount of Olives at the ascension. We see the Spirit of God at work upon the Son of God from the nativity throughout His life, death, resurrection and ascension. It is that Spirit that He sends to you and me. The same Spirit that was with Him from the womb to the tomb and back to the throne, from the throne is sent to you from the moment you have been born again until the moment He brings you home to be with Him. It is the Spirit who gives life for My words are spirit and life (John 6:63).

Here are the takeaways. There are three of them. The first one is *no one* comes to the Son of God without the Word of God first coming to them. There are many to whom the Word of God has come that have not come to the Son of God. The Word of God can come to you and you not go to the Son of God. In fact there are probably many who attend church in the Advent season who have heard the Word of God but they have not surrendered to Christ as Lord and Savior. They haven't confessed they are a sinner and are in need of Jesus as their Savior and Lord. No one can come to the Son of God without the Word of God but there are those who have come to the Word of God but haven't come to the Son of God. So what is the difference? I'll tell you in the second takeaway.

The second takeaway is those who do come to the Son of God when they hear the Word of God are those brought by the power of the Spirit of God. The only reason you are saved today is because someone brought the Word of God to you. Praise God! The only reason you heard the Word of God and went to the Son of God is because the Spirit of God brought you to Him. Praise His name forever! There is no room for the religious arrogant and the self-righteous. We are what we are by the grace of God. The Word of God came to us and the Spirit of God brought us with that Word to Jesus.

The third takeaway is the saving power of the Word of God through the Spirit of God is by the grace of God. We didn't deserve it and we didn't merit it. In fact, none of us wanted it, but praise God He changed your 'wanter.' We who didn't want Him, He wanted us. We who needed Him did not want Him. He who did not need us wanted us. Then He changed our 'wanter' so that we would want Him as Lord and Savior. That was through the work of the Spirit of God by the power of the grace of God, the relentless love of God that came after us.

Sometimes there is a heady moment for a pastor when someone says to them 'Pastor, I want you to know it's been a great blessing to come to this church. I'm grateful the Lord brought me to salvation and I'm grateful I came here because I never heard the Gospel until I came here and heard you preach.' But here's the way the Lord humbles pastors. I share this with pastors because I know it's true of me. I have people sitting under my ministry that are saying that same thing to another pastor somewhere else and I know that because that was me. I grew up in a church that preached the Gospel of saving grace every Sunday but I didn't hear it until I was 21.

Sometimes people are in churches that don't preach the Gospel but most of the time they are in churches that preach the Gospel but they just don't have eyes to see and ears to hear. When did they get eyes to see and ears to hear? It is called the sovereign grace of a glorious God. If He is giving you those vibes to hear Him and see Him by faith then come today to the One who will give you everlasting life. The Spirit of God did not come for you to talk about the Spirit of God and same with the Word of God. The Spirit of God and the Word of God have come to you that Jesus would be everything to you and that He would be your life. That same Jesus came to you by the grace of God.

So if you can't get to Jesus without the Word of God and the Word of God doesn't profit without the Spirit of God which is all because of the grace of God, what do you think Satan doing today? One thing he is doing is trying to distract us from the Word of God and neglect it. He is trying to tell you your iPhone is much more important than your Bible. He is trying to convince you that some sporting event is much more important than the preaching, singing and hearing of God's Word on the Lord's Day. He is trying his best because Satan knows you can't know the Son of God without the Word of God so he wants to keep you away from it. He either wants you to be indifferent to it or neglect it.

Another way Satan distracts you is to get you to substitute experience for the Word of God. The older I get the more emotional I get so I love experiences. I get so overwhelmed in worship with experiences but you do not build your Christian life seeking experiences of God. You build your Christian life with the Word of God that gives you understanding of the experiences God gives you. Your Christian life doesn't come by experiences for it comes by the Spirit of God through the Word of God so that you know the experiences and what God is doing – what is of God and what is not of God. You can only know it by the Word of God. Love experiences but have experiences that are formed, inspired and interpreted from the Word of God.

Don't let Satan make you silent or ashamed of the Word of God, but speak the Word of God. When the Spirit of God gets a hold of you then the Word of God becomes dear to you. My granddaddy would make me memorize Scripture but I wasn't excited about it. Then when my aunt died he gave me her Bible but at the time I wasn't excited about it. I am now. Then when I got saved, other than my dad and mom the first person I wanted to tell was my granddaddy. My wife and I drove all the way to Augusta, Georgia to tell him. When I got there he had bought me a Bible and I couldn't wait to devour it. I was the guy who made sure I didn't have church clothes ready whenever I went somewhere because I didn't want to hear God's Word. Then all of a sudden I can't get enough of it and now I want to be around those who I used to run from who love the Word of God. All of that begin to change in my life.

Intentionality and regularity in the Word and prayer is the key to veracity and tenacity for the Son of God. We are all looking for the exotic but what we need is intentionality and regularity in the Word of God which are the rhythms of life. My family has rhythms in life for it's what makes us family. I have friends that I have regular routine habits of the heart in relationship for it's what binds us together. I love the exotic moment of a unique experience but what really puts the foundation is regularity and intentionality because it brings veracity and tenacity.

I love January of every year when we introduce a ministry theme at Briarwood and we start digging into it from God's Word. I love it when the mission's festival is on its way and we start praying about faith promise every year. I love that first Sunday when the flags come in and we sing "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun." I don't need something new, exotic or novel. In fact, I anticipate it. I want the nails set with regularity. I'm fine for the unique periodically but give me that intentionality and regularity for that's what makes family and binds fellowship. I love it when the members bring the faith promise cards of commitment and lay them at the feet of the sent ones. Then the flags go out and we go out singing 'lift high the cross of Christ.' I love how we remember Christianity in America and God's providential gifts and those who gave so much for us that we are able to enjoy in the context of God's providence in this nation. I love how we work through stewardship in our congregation getting finances to the work of the Gospel here and around the world. Tenacity and veracity are built with intentionality and regularity.

I love every Lord's Day, morning and evening. Come let us worship the Lord our God. I love to hear His hymns and songs sung, His creeds and His confessions as God keeps setting the nail and binding His family together, uniting us together with intentionality and regularity in the Lord and for the Lord. I don't have to wait for the Lord's Day for every morning I can meet Him intentionally and regularly or every evening at bedtime or whenever. A family can come together and surrender to the Spirit of God and read the Word of God. It is God's Word saturating us, marinating us and we surrender to the Spirit of God and unite in the beaten old paths of the Word of God. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Because of the Spirit of God and the Word of God, those who came to that nativity did not have to wonder. They knew Who they were coming to see, Emmanuel. They knew what He had come to do – to save them from their sins. You, Mary, Joseph – we can know by the Spirit of God through the Word of God that is true. Spend a few moments in silent prayer as you think of those two unseen but conspicuous Attendees to the birth of Jesus – the Spirit of God and the Word of God, to the glory of God, by the grace of God. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE WORD OF GOD

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

I. No one comes to the Son of God without the Word of God first coming to them.

II. Those who do come to the Son of God when they hear the Word of God are those brought by the Spirit of God.

III. The Saving Power of the Word of God through the Spirit of God is by the Grace of God.