



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24
PAGEANT SERVICE AT 10:30AM

LUKE 2

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

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In the quiet of this Christmas Eve night...

Think back with me...

To the worst, most disappointing Christmas gift you ever received,
whether last year, or beyond..

I remember very clearly...

When I was 10, I opened a pretty big gift from a relative, all excited, only to discover....it was...

- an automobile oil filter...and of course,
- I didn't even drive then.
- I was totally crestfallen.

This memory led me to do some research on some of the worst gifts ever given:

One said:

- I received a skateboard...

- WHEN I WAS 8 MONTHS PREGNANT, AND I DON'T LIKE SKATEBOARDING...
- And it was from...
- MY HUSBAND!

- Another:

- I received a burial plot from my father...

- Another...I received a pair of walkie Talkies when I was 14, the only problem?
 - I'm an only child
 - And both of my parents are profoundly deaf!

- And finally.. a guy In High School received a book from Santa called:
 - **"Coping with Being Adopted"**...
 - IT WAS A HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS BECAUSE UP TO THAT POINT
 - HE SAID...
 - I HAD NO IDEA I WAS ADOPTED!!!

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These make all your worst gifts look a lot better don't they!

In all of life, I have discovered there are:

1. People who are really poor gift givers...
2. And there are people who are poor gift...receivers..
Folks critical of the very gift they've been given.

Poor gift givers
Poor gift receivers...

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Tonight I want to share with you the greatest, most incredible gift ever given to the human race-in the history of the human race...

You guessed it, Jesus, but not just Jesus...

The VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS-OUR GREATEST GIFT.

In Luke Chapter 1, Angel Gabriel comes to Mother Mary and says:

"Mary you will give birth to a child, the Son of the Living God, whose kingdom shall never end."

Mary dumbfounded says...

“How can this be since I am a virgin, I’ve never been with a man.?”

Gabriel responds...The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will OVERSHADOW you.

The key word is OVERSHADOW, like a great fog saturating someone...

Through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus would be birthed from a virgin.

Why is this so critical?

I don’t care how good or how bad your last name is, we all have a sin problem...because we are all related to Adam and Eve.

I know that’s anti-climatic on Christmas Eve...

The truth is...We all have defective genes, we’re all born with sin we’d rather keep in the womb!

This is exactly why Jesus had to be born of a virgin!

Stay with me here...

If Jesus had entered the world naturally through human reproduction,

He would have been one more child of this fallen and sinful world, just as sinful as the rest of us.

But because God sent Jesus to rescue the world FROM sin,

God through the Holy Spirit

PLACES Jesus into the virgin womb of Mary, to avoid the sin of humanity.

According to Hebrew tradition, it is through the father that sin is transmitted to a baby, not through the mother.

Therefore as Oswald Chambers puts it...

Jesus was born IN-TO this world-
not FROM this world.

Jesus is in no way a product of the natural earth or the union of a human father or mother.

No, he is Lord Himself, the infinite one who created the universe, taking on the form of a human being.

Isn't this amazing!

It's why in our Nicene Creed: we say..

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, eternally BEGOTTEN-OF THE FATHER
BEGOTTEN...NOT MADE

That Hymn, O Come All Ye Faithful...

Very...God...

BEGOTTEN NOT CREATED...

O Come let us Adore Him..

Jesus IS **PLACED-begotten**

into Mary's womb perfect from the heavenly and sinless realm of eternity.

And would die taking on our sins to release us from that eternal death.

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In our living room right behind our Christmas tree is a crucifix of Jesus to help us remember Jesus was:

- birthed
 - to disconnect us from sin,
- and died to carry that sin away.

The Supreme gift of Jesus and the Virgin Birth is realizing Jesus was disconnected from sin,

to connect us to the Father.

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OKAY MY FRIENDS, BACK TO THE BEGINNING.

There are people who are poor in:

- receiving gifts

And people poor in:

- giving gifts..

To those who are poor at receiving gifts, I'm right there with you.

There are times I'm sad to admit it,

I have not been as grateful receiving a heart felt gift from my wife.

We can have the very same response to the supreme gift of the virgin birth.

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There are essentially two ways we receive it poorly...

The first is....

- indifference...
- or apathy

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But secondly..there are others who don't receive the gift well because they don't understand the gift.

Where we hear things like:

I just can't believe in the virgin birth, it's too supernatural...I believe only in what I can see-

And therefore I don't receive it.

Kind of like receiving a laptop for Christmas and saying I can't understand how this thing works,

Therefore I'm not going to receive it.

If we don't understand the gift of the virgin birth, then we end up saying Jesus was a good guy...

one of the many gods that can help us get to heaven..

There are even churches out there that have received the gift this way..

I remember the very first Christmas Card I received from our Episcopal Bishop in Washington, who said..

- As Gabriel gave the Torah to the Jews
- As Gabriel revealed the birth of Jesus
- As Gabriel was sent by God to reveal the sacred Quran to Muhammad...

We are all one. Welcome to Washington. REALLY?

If Jesus is just one more of the many gods... then how on earth could he remove our sin?

Would God have given His begotten and only Son to live and then die had there been some other way?

Jesus in Acts 4:12 says... Salvation is found in no one else, there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved..

Why is this so important?

The virgin birth teaches the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

If we refuse the gift by downplaying the Virgin Birth..

We rob Jesus of the power to take our sins upon Himself!

I remember how hard this was for me to get my head around...

Yet I found there were two men who helped me receive this gift..

First was Luke who wrote the story..

- Luke Himself was a medical doctor! He knew all about child birth..
- Luke was also a painstaking researcher who based his book on eyewitness accounts.

It would have been just as hard for Luke to receive and believe in the virgin birth as it is for us in our own day...

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Then there was Isaiah..

681 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem..

Isaiah in Chapter 7 writes:

“The Lord will give you the sign...

The VIRGIN will conceive a son and will call him...Immanuel, God with us!”

The Virgin Birth is the fulfilling of History, the fulfilling of God’s promises!

Which means...

We can trust God!

We can trust the Bible as truth!

This gift is real!

It's no knock off Rolex watch..

Or useless oil filter, this is the real deal!

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So..let's go back to worst gifts...and talk about best gifts..

- Receiving the gift of Jesus saying:
 - Thank you for saving my life!
- Apathy replaced with Awesome joy!
- Confusion replaced with Conviction!

Which leads to giving gifts...

The very best gift we could give Jesus in return...

- is our heart
- our life
- our being.

How?

Just as Jesus was born into the world and not from it...

He must be born into our lives in the same way!

Christ doesn't naturally live in any human,

He must invade that person from the outside as he invaded our world.

Meaning we can't really inherit faith,

We can inherit a faithful heritage, but God has no grandchildren..

Each generation has to come to him on their own..

Therefore the best gift **we can give Jesus** is the gift of opening our palms and saying:

Jesus, be birthed in me...

My heart is your manger scene...

be birthed again right here.

This is my gift to you Lord.

It's a prayer I pray every day.

Be born from the outside-invade my insides and replace my genetic condition with yours
Dear Lord!

The power of this gift is that it is the:

- Perfect,
- Coming to dwell within the imperfect...-
- to transform and make new!

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Here is the best news...

It's the double gift...

We give Jesus the gift of our heart, and Jesus gives us gifts in return to give to others..

When Jesus-

born of a virgin

comes to live within us,
We are made forgiven and free,

Jesus then in turn gives the gifts of:

- love
- joy
- peace
- patience
- kindness

- goodness
- gentleness
- faithfulness
- and self control!

So...in Giving the gift of our heart to Jesus,

Jesus in turn enables us to be the most amazing gift givers!

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Let's apply this to our lives..

Jesus coming into you sinlessly to be your fuel to forgive and be forgiven-therefore-----

To that parent who's hurt you, you can say...

- Through the gift of the virgin birth of Jesus ...I am disconnected from the hurt,
- And connected to Christ in forgiveness
- As I have been forgiven..
- Mom-Dad..Please forgive me...as I forgive you..

To that son who has lived the prodigal life, the gift of the virgin birth says to the parent:

- Through the gift of the virgin birth of Jesus ...I am disconnected from the rejection
- And connected to Christ in unconditional love..
- Son: you are forgiven son
- come home...

To that spouse that sees no hope for their marriage it means that:

- Through the gift of the virgin birth of Jesus ...I am disconnected from past sins
- And connected to Christ in humility to say:
- Forgive me...
- And Or
- You are forgiven
- Yes, like the human race, our marriages could have new beginnings!

- **The empty womb of Mary proves God alone can make something out of nothing.**

In fact as we said a couple of weeks ago:

This gift of the virgin birth should transform dining room tables at every Thanksgiving and Christmas!

Imagine a home where because of the virgin birth..

There was no:

- Estrangement
- No walls...
- No tension

This should be the norm!!!!

Jesus coming into you sinlessly to be your fuel to forgive and be forgiven.

What a gift to Receive and Give!

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My friends, full stop..

What I've just told you is the definition of Love...

God loved us so much he gave his only and sinless Son born of a virgin to live and die for us...

Which also means that because of this Gift:

- you **CAN** trust God to fulfill His promises..
- All things **ARE** possible.

You've heard that before but on this Christmas Eve-

I'm here to say it again, you **CAN** trust God, through His sinless Son, all things really are possible!

We can believe in Miracles!

Where do you need one such miracle tonight?

God has shown He can and will do it.

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Let me finish with a personal story of that gift being acted out in my marriage.

When my wife was 11 years old, her father took his own life...

When she was a teenager...

she allowed herself to be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit..

And gave her life to Christ.

Yet she still had this fear of abandonment in her heart..

At the age of 29, 7 years after we met..

She experienced through this church, inner healing...

As part of that inner healing, she had a vision where she saw herself in the arms of Jesus
...and her father....

Reconnected to his heavenly Father.

Her wound of the fear of abandonment never came back!

That led to the gift of a new life!

She no longer is a victim or a wounded warrior...

In fact all those years later that gift she received

- Allowed her to give the gift of forgiving her father,
- Allowed her to give the gift of loving others more deeply...

As her spouse I can say that with 1,000 percent certainty.
He, Jesus, is our perfect gift.

Amen.