

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Savior

THE INCARNATION OF GOD

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.

Yet a ruler of Israel,
whose origins are in the distant past,
will come from you on my behalf.

The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies
until the woman in labor gives birth.

Then at last his fellow countrymen
will return from exile to their own land.

And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord's strength,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

Then his people will live there undisturbed,
for he will be highly honored around the world.
And he will be the source of peace.

All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. (Luke 1.3-5)

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. (Luke 2.6-7)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me. (John 10.27-28)

After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. (Revelation 7.9)

In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

He existed in the beginning with God.

(John 1.1-2)

Through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

(Colossians 1.20)

MICAH 5.2-5 NLT



Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."

LUKE 1.30-35, 38 NLT



Seeing her pain, the stinking barnyard, their poverty, the people's indifference, the humiliation, and the sense of utter helplessness, feeling shame at not being able to provide for young Mary on the night of her travail—all that would make a man either curse or cry.

R. KENT HUGHES, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 85

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY & HUMAN WEAKNESS

- ▶ God is sovereign, that is, by His authority, power, and plan, He “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will” (Ephesians 1.11). In His sovereignty, He leverages both the superiority and the weakness of human position to achieve and fulfill His purposes.
 - ▶ Caesar’s decree did not ultimately come from his position as emperor, but from God’s power as ruler over human affairs. God used Caesar Augustus to cause the word of an obscure prophet to be fulfilled.
 - ▶ Throughout human history, God has often exercised His sovereignty in visible and supernatural manifestations. More often, however, He chooses to work by His supernatural power through human weakness and thus achieve His purposes.

- ▶ In the Incarnation, God chose to immerse himself in the details of human history and the limitations of human nature. Thus, He *identified* with us by subjecting himself to the difficulties of our sinful broken world, and as our *substitute*, was able to make atonement for our failures through His infinite righteousness.

Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

HEBREWS 2.17-18

- ▶ Even if we acknowledge that God is great, all-powerful, and merciful, and yet believe that our personal good efforts achieve merit, we minimize the transcendent glory of God. It is in the Incarnation that His all-sufficient merit is revealed, as in His righteousness, Christ atoned for our irremediable transgression.

- ▶ Like Mary, it is when we surrender our personal sovereignty, preferences, and weaknesses to God's plan and sufficiency, that His purposes can be revealed in and through us.

Because of these surpassing revelations, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.