

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

God's Purposes in History: Things Aren't Always What They Seem

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. (Matthew 1)

I. THE VILLAGE GOSSIP

II. THE INSIDE STORY

A. God's Messiah: Not much to look at:

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53)

B. God's Messiah: Not popular with the masses

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. (Psalm 22)

⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." (Isaiah 49)

C. God's Messiah: The royal embarrassment made right

1. Of David's line:

⁵ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 23)

2. David's line, not so fine:

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,
(Matthew 1)

Incest!

Pagan Foreigner

Adultery & Murder

3. A Pure Virgin – a Holy Babe

⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7)

III. THE WAY GOD WORKS

A. God's plan is hidden from the "know-it-all's"

⁶ ... the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. (Colossians 1)

²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²² All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Luke 10)

B. God's wisdom makes the wise foolish

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:27)

C. God's mercy comes to those who humbly receive it

¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. (Isaiah 57)

¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Luke 18)

IV. JESUS IS OUR MODEL

- Just because they criticize, doesn't mean you're in the wrong ...
- Just because it's hard, doesn't mean that God won't ask you to go through it ...
- Just because it seems small and insignificant, doesn't mean God won't use it for his saving purposes in the world ...