

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. I'd ask you to take your hymnals and actually open them to page 322. It's a Small catechism Luth and especially the creed. We're going to focus upon the second article of the creed, which talks about Jesus Christ himself, "And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." Now, that is exactly what we have going on here in the gospel lesson. Joseph is about ready to divorce Mary because she is with child.

So now let's get the picture. Let's set up the scene for a little bit. Mary is told by an angel, the same angel, that she is going to conceive and bear a child by the power of the Holy Spirit and this child is going to save humanity. Now, that's quite shocking for a young lady in her teens probably to receive a message from an angel that she's going to conceive and bear a child. Now, she is betrothed to Joseph, which means legally, she's married, but they haven't actually come together and had relationships yet. So they're legally together, but nothing has gone on there to produce a child.

So in this dream, she's also told that her cousin, Elizabeth, is six months pregnant. So you can imagine she wants some confirmation of what's going on and a little bit of consolation and encouragement. So she goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. And, of course, we know the story of John leaping in the womb when Mary shows up and hears a voice. But the main point of this today is that Mary stays there for three months and then heads back to her home.

Now, three months, she's beginning to show a little bit. And Joseph, who is her betroth, now sees his wife, whom he has not yet been together with, with a child. You can imagine a little bit of shock when that comes about. But he is a righteous man. And so he resolves to divorce her quietly. Now, he's a righteous man and he supposedly chose a woman who was going to be righteous as well, which is even more of a shock, "I thought you were a righteous woman, and now you're pregnant?"

But think about Mary's response to the angel when she's told all of this, "Let it be to me as you have said." That's an amazing response. This is why we do celebrate Mary and think that she is a wonderful woman. Now, she is just a woman who is a sinner like you and me, who needs the savior, her own son, just like you and me, but her response to the communication that she's going to bear the Messiah is pretty amazing, "Let it be to me as you have said."

Now, let's face it. That should be our response, should it not? With our everyday cares and concerns of life, with the struggles that we face each and every day, "Let it be to me as you have said," because God has said and promised that he gives us the peace, which passes all understanding. The joy of our salvation, the confidence

and the comfort that he is with us always to the very end of the age, the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control, all of those things, those are ours. He has promised them as ours. And yet, when we face a hardship in our life, a challenge, a frustration, a temptation, do we go to the Lord and say, "Let it be to me as you have said"? Do we trust God to guide and direct us in our lives or do we try and figure it out on our own, wrestle with it, struggle with it, worry, doubt, fret, get angry, try and solve it with our own devices or do we say, "Let it be to me as you have said"?

Now, when things go well, we're more than likely to say, "God, thank you for letting it happen this way." But when it doesn't go well, when we struggle, when we are in pain, both physically and emotionally, can we go to the Lord and say, "Let it be to me as you have said"? This is why we honor Mary, because she was going to face some challenging situations, but she trusted in her Lord and trusted the word that was given to her. We also are called to trust God's Word. He has fulfilled the Word all the way through scripture, even so much to say that, "I will give you... You will bear a son, a virgin will bear a son, and you'll call his name Emmanuel." That's what the angel tells Joseph, quoting from the Isaiah passage.

Now, before we get into any more, let's go to that Isaiah passage and figure out what's going on, what prompted this prophecy. Ahaz, the king of Judah, not a nice guy, not a holy man. There's a whole line of kings who are descendants of David, and very few of them, one or two, actually serve God well. The rest of them fall short. And Ahaz is falling well short of his responsibilities. In fact, he's causing people to go after false gods, and God is sending his prophet, Isaiah, to tell him, "Look, enough is enough. The Northern kingdoms of Israel and Syria are threatening to attack you, and I promise I am going to save you."

Now, why does God promise to save Ahaz and Judah? Because they're righteous and holy and doing the right things? No, but because he made a promise. He made a promise to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to David that their descendant would come and would solve the problem of sin. And so he promises he's going to save Judah, even though they are not doing it right and following after him. Even though they are sinning and rebelling against him, he still is going to provide a sign because of his Word and his will.

Now, Ahaz says in a false sense of piety, "No, I'm not going to tempt God." You spent your entire life tempting God by worshiping other gods. And now when God actually says, "I will give you a sign," you say, "No, I don't need one" and you think you're not tempting God in that way? I love Isaiah's response, "Is it not enough that you weary men, that you also weary my God as well?" And it is wearisome to God when we don't hold him to his Word. God wants us to call upon him in every trouble. God wants us to pray to him when we are afraid. God wants

us to trust his Word when he says, "I will be with you. I will never give you anything more than you can handle. I will provide a way through it all. I will bring you home to be with me. I have saved you from your sins." He has told us to call upon him. He has told us to trust him. He has told us to rely upon the blessings of God as if they are our own.

And we do weary him when we don't go to him with trust and hope. We weary him when we say, "Yeah, God, I know you promised, but I don't think this is working out right. I think I need to do something different. I don't think you're doing the right thing. I don't think this is the way my life should be." We're not trusting his Word. He wants us to call upon him. He wants us to pray. He wants us to remind him of his promises to us because he wants us to know that his promises are sure and he will never, ever forsake us. And we can always find hope and promise and forgiveness and comfort in his Word.

So you don't weary God by not asking for a sign. You weary God by ignoring the Word of God and trying to do it your own way, which is what Ahaz did. And so Isaiah gives the promise and sign, "A virgin shall give birth to a child, a son, and his name will be Emmanuel." Now, Matthew repeats that then later on in this section of Matthew and he says... He's quoting from the prophet and he says, "Your name will be called Emmanuel," and then he makes sure that we know what that means. So he defines it and translates it for us. And Emmanuel means God with us, or in the Hebrew, it's the with us God, God who is always with us, who is present with us, "You will name him Emmanuel."

But then just before that, he said, "Mary, your wife is going to bear son and you will call his name Jesus." Wait a second. I thought you said it was going to be called Emmanuel. What does Jesus mean then? Immanuel means God with us. Jesus translated into the Hebrew, the Hebrew name that Jesus was named was Yeshua. And Yeshua means God saves us. So the God who is with us is the God who saves us. The God who is born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, the God who is both man and God is not only with us, but he's going to save us.

The whole point of him being with us is so that he might save us. And he can't save us unless he is with us in every way, becoming a man like us, but without sin so that he could fulfill the law that we could not, so that he could, as a human, give us hope through his death because God cannot die. But when God comes to be with us, he saves us by dying as the man God on the cross. He was God so that his sacrifice would be sufficient for all of us. And he was man so that that sacrifice would come to humanity, all of us. Both were necessary.

As we state in the second article, he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. What does this mean, Lutherus? I believe that Jesus Christ, true

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God, begotten of the Father before all the eternity and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord. And he has done all of this so that he might redeem us and save us so that we might live, be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. He has done this so that we might be his own, so that God with us can also make us be with God when the last day comes. When we die, we know that we are going home to be with the God who is with us, to be with the God who saves us because just as he has risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, so also will we. This is most certainly true.

Now, Paul reminds us of the reason that he is God and man, again, reminding us he is descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. Now, that declared doesn't mean that he wasn't the son of God, but finally declared it. It was this, that in his death and resurrection, it was announced to the world that God with us has become the God who saves us and he is truly the son of God, our savior and Lord. And for that, we have peace because he has called us to be his children. He has adopted us and brought us into the family and made us his own so that when the tough times of life come, we can say with Mary, "Let it be to me as you have said," because this is most certainly true.

Now, may the grace of God and the love of the Holy Spirit and the communion of the saints be with us always under life everlasting. Amen.