

A Son

Luke 1:26-38

December 17, 2017

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”

What child is this? So far we have considered this question from the perspective of the shepherds and the Wise Men. Today we look at Mary. And I will confess that I have meditated for a bit of time on this one...on just how to put it together. We may be going just a touch outside the box.

Here is one important truth we know: we know that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. “For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son” it says in the Gospel of John. One of our creeds says, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father....” Because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, we are children of God. The Scriptures refer to the “spirit of adoption”. But we have the full rights of children. We are joint heirs with Jesus. Jesus called God “Abba, Father”. We call God, “Abba, Father”. Pretty cool deal there. Amen?

Let me insert here this bit of Scripture truth. We call God Father. Still, there are passages in the Bible where God likens his love and compassion for us to that of a mother. In Isaiah, chapter forty-nine and verse fifteen we read, “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” Again, in Isaiah, chapter sixty-six and verse thirteen we read, “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” Before Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time he said to those who would spurn him, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings....” So there’s that.

Now...we all know sons who look like their fathers...sons who grow up to look very much like their fathers. Right? Jesus looked just like his Father...just like God. It says in the book of Hebrews, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.” Colossians says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Jesus looked like his Father. Jesus looks like his Father. They are one.

So now, let me ask this: have you ever known a son who looked just like his mother? Sure. We have known that too.

All of that to say this: Jesus had a mother. Mary. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God his Father. But Jesus also had a real flesh and blood earthly mother. We’ll look at Joseph next week. It could be said he was like a stepfather to Jesus. But Mary was the mother of Jesus. Jesus was conceived in her. She carried Jesus in her womb for nine months. Jesus was nourished by her. Mary went through the pangs of childbirth. Jesus called her “Mother”. So here is a different question for you: do you think Jesus...Jesus who was every bit divine and also every bit human...human in every way just as we are...do you think Jesus looked anything like his mother? And, please, don’t dismiss that question just yet.

What did Mary see as she looked at her child? What child is this? I’m going to suggest three things.

One, this child is obedience...obedience even in difficult, challenging situations. In that way he kind of looked like his mother.

You know, we presented our fifth annual Living Nativity last evening. Don’t know if all of you know this, but we had a bit of a challenge finding Mary and Joseph this year. We needed two Marys and two Josephs. Well, maybe not

needed, but that was the desire. There were some we asked who just were not able to do it. We thought we had some folks lined up, but scheduling conflicts arose. We had one person committed to playing Mary. But it was not until a few days before the actual performances that we found our other Mary and our two Josephs. But I was never overly concerned. Yeah...right!

I mentioned our lack of a Mary and a Joseph—and our ongoing search—at one of our fellowship hours. Terry Kopp insightfully asked, “Do you suppose God had the same challenge?” In other words, was it a challenge for God to find a Mary and a Joseph?

Now I realize this requires some use of imagination and the taking of a bit of liberty with the story, but think about it. This angel, Gabriel, came to a young Mary and told her she had been favored by God...favored enough to be asked to do this rather important thing. The angel told her she would be pregnant and give birth to a son and he would be named Jesus and he would be great and he would be called the Son of the Most High. Mary had just one question. “How?” And the angel told her the Holy Spirit would be involved. And Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. The Lord’s will be done.”

So I wonder if there might have been anyone before Mary who was given this same opportunity...and the answer was, “Nope. Sounds too strange to me.” Just imagining. The point is that Mary saw herself as the Lord’s servant. She was the Lord’s servant before she was Joseph’s fiancé. She was obedient...obedient in the face of something rather overwhelming. You think maybe Jesus, as he was growing up, witnessed his mother’s service and obedience to God?

Fast forward many years. Jesus was in a garden. He faced a situation so overwhelming that he was sweating drops that looked like blood. And he said to his Father, “I am your servant. Your will be done.”

What child is this? He was obedient...obedient in our place...so that he could be a perfect sacrifice for our lack of obedience.

Two, this child is one who never leaves us...who never forsakes us...who is with us in the good and the bad and the awful.

After Jesus was born, when he was eight days old, he was presented in the temple. There was the circumcision and the consecration of the firstborn. A man named Simeon was there. Simeon said specifically to Mary that her son would be the cause of the falling and rising of many. Then Simeon told Mary, “And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Parents...when your child hurts, don’t you hurt a little too? And it doesn’t have to be a physical hurt. I know when one of my kids was feeling bad because a friend called them a name or their best friend said they weren’t their best friend anymore...well, I kind of hurt with them.

Jesus was called names and he was bullied and he was bloodied and most of his friends deserted him. And then he hung in agony. At one point he cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” A loaded question that means so much more than we often think it means. Still, Jesus cried out.

But Jesus’ mother was there...at the cross. Jesus acknowledged his mother. He saw to it that she would be cared for. Can you even imagine how she felt? We talk about Jesus...the Lamb of God...the perfect sacrifice hanging from the cross for us. For Mary...that was her son...her firstborn...her son whom she carried in her womb and whom she nursed and raised. It must have felt like a sword was piercing her own soul. But she was there in that awful hour.

What child is this? I think he looks like that. He does not leave us...never forsakes us. Don’t ever think he does. In even the worst time, he is standing right there. And it hurts him too.

Three, this child is the one who nourishes us. Remember...the shepherds saw the one who said, “I am the good shepherd.” The Wise Men who followed the light saw the one who said, “I am the light of the world.” Mary, who nursed Jesus, saw the one who said, “...but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

Indeed, the water I give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

I think one of God’s gifts to people is this longing that is in each person. It is there to one degree or another. You know...there are people who are restless...people who do not seem to be satisfied...people who are never satisfied (I’ve met some of those)...people who are always wanting more out of life...people who think there has got to be more. People search. Sometimes this search leads to not-so-good people, places, and things. Down through the centuries philosophers and theologians began referring to this longing as a God-shaped hole or emptiness. People seek to fill it.

It was a mathematician and physicist (Blaise Pascal) who said, “There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every (person) which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known by Jesus.” Made known by Jesus.... Jesus satisfies the need of every longing heart.

That’s who this child is...this baby. He is obedience...obedience in our place so that he could be an obedient, perfect sacrifice...because we fall way short. This child...this baby is one who will never leave us...will never forsake us...no matter the circumstance. This child is the one who nourishes us and satisfies our every longing and desire. If you are feeling empty today...unfulfilled...unsatisfied...well, just take a look at Jesus...and take a good, long drink from what he provides.

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”