

FRIEDENS REFORMED CHURCH

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Winter 2022



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ANDY

I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. Isaiah 43:11

Christmas Sermon: This passage assumes two core doctrine of the Christian faith: The sinfulness of mankind, and the work of the Savior.

You'd think there'd be no debate about this, but these doctrines have always been hotly contested. Nearly the first 450 years of Church history were spent in defending the Person, Nature, and Deity of Jesus. The Nicene Creed, which we've recited the past several weeks, was written in an effort to codify the Bible's teaching about the person and work of Christ within the Holy Trinity.

Let me tell you good Christmas story: A minister named Nicholas of Myra (whom we know today as Saint Nick, aka Santa Claus), was among the 318 ministers who gathered at the famed Council of Nicæa in the year 325AD. This is the Council that produced the Nicene Creed.

They convened to deal with a heretic named Arius, who was denying that the Son is of the same Essence as the Father. You know, when Jesus spoke of the importance of every single "jot or tittle" of God's Word, He was not kidding. The debate between the heretic Arius and the rest of orthodox Christendom, turned on one Greek letter. The phrase in the Creed, "of one substance," is the English rendering of the Greek word homoousios. The important part is that prefix homo, which means "the same." Arius added one letter homoi, which means "similar," rather than the same. Arius' form of the Creed would have read, "Being of a similar substance of the Father." That may sound mysterious, but it's just a convoluted way of saying that Jesus, the Son of God, is not true God.

During one of the sessions of the Nicene Council, Arius had the floor to present his position. Nicholas was sitting there listening to an ordained minister of Christ's church openly and repeatedly deny that Christ is God. Finally, Nicholas couldn't take it anymore. He got up, walked across the forum and slapped Arius in the mouth for his persistent denial of the deity of Christ. I bet the Jehovah's Witnesses are glad that never became a Christmas tradition! It gives a whole new meaning to getting your two front teeth for Christmas, doesn't it?

In Luke 2, we read the announcement of the angels: "This day, in the city of David, is born unto you, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

I want us to think about that word: Savior. The New Testament hardly asserts anything more than that Jesus is the Savior. But in our text from Isaiah, God says, "I am Jehovah. Besides Me there is no Savior." Of course, this can only mean one thing: Jesus is God. That grand fact constitutes the very essence and glory of the Gospel. He who took upon Himself the form of a servant and offered up the sacrifice of Calvary, is "God over all, blessed forever."

This is what gives the cross all its glory and efficacy. The whole fabric of Evangelical truth is built on this foundation: Christ is God, and it is the Maker and Sovereign Ruler of the universe who made

expiation for sin. On any other hypothesis, the cross is just an ordinary event. Just some guy, dying as a martyr for his cause.

If Jesus were not God, if He were a mere created being, however great and glorious, where is the mystery of Godliness – that God was manifest in the flesh? Where are the unfathomable depths of divine love into which the angel desire to look?

If Christ be only a servant of God, however exalted, what was there in His appearance in our world, to constitute a new era in heaven, and to fill its inhabitants with astonishment and wonder?

The angelic host appears over the fields of Bethlehem, causing the mountains of Judea to echo with their acclamation of worship because – What? – a mere frail creature had consented to do his Maker's will? Nonsense!

If Jesus were merely a man, and not God, why then did the angels cry, "Glory to GOD in the highest"? Why do the courts of heaven resound with a new song of praise to God for His redeeming mercy, if this redemption was wrought by the labors of a mere finite creature?

Are we to believe that the whole dispensation of Moses was designed to prepare the way for a mere human messenger of God to declare His will and seal his testimony with his blood, like many good men before have done?

Why is John commissioned to prepare the way of the LORD JEHOVAH if Jesus were a mere man? Isaiah 40, which is the prophecy about John the Baptist, tells us that John's message is, "Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." This is no mere man for whom John is forerunner. This is God.

The Lord is my shepherd. I am the Good Shepherd. He will feed His flock like a shepherd. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

If He were a mere man, why then did the patriarchs and prophets foretell His coming, and celebrate His praises? Why does Micah say that His "goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"? Why were His sufferings typified by the continual offering of divinely appointed sacrifices for so many centuries? And why did nature shudder, and shroud herself in darkness, at the consummation of those sufferings?

All these things are completely and utterly incomprehensible on the theory that Christ is a mere created and dependent being.

But view Him as God manifest in the flesh, as voluntarily laying aside His glory and descending from the Throne of Infinite Majesty, to assume our nature and to expiate the guilt of our ruined race, and all of the pieces fall into place.

The ceremonies of the Old Testament administration, the songs of the prophets and angels all make sense. They are preparing the way for the visible manifestation of God among man. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Therefore, without the declaration of Christ's Godhead, there is no preaching of the Gospel.

Our catechism teaches us this truth in Questions 14-18

Q. 14. Can there be found anywhere one who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?

A. None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it.

Q. 15. What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?

A. For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God.

Q. 16. Why must He be very man, and also perfectly righteous?

A. Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others.

Q. 17. Why must He in one person be also very God?

A. That He might, by the power of His Godhead, sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life.

Q. 18. Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God and a real righteous man?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

The mystery of God assuming into personal union a true human nature is absolutely unfathomable. Worship is the only proper response.

The wonder of the Incarnation is described beautifully by Augustine, in one of his famous Christmas sermons. He writes:

"In the bosom of His Father, He existed before all the cycles of ages; born of an earthly Mother, He entered upon the course of the years on this day. The Maker of man became Man that He, Ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast; that He, the Bread, might be hungry; that He, the Fountain, might thirst; that He, the Light, might sleep; that He, the Way, might be wearied by the journey; that He, the Truth, might be accused by false witnesses; that He, the Judge of the living and the dead, might be brought to trial by a mortal judge; that He, Justice, might be condemned by the unjust; that He, Discipline, might be scourged with whips;... that He, the Foundation, might be suspended upon a cross; that Courage might be weakened; that Security might be wounded; that Life might die.

"To endure these and similar indignities for us, to free us, unworthy creatures, He who existed as the Son of God before all ages, without a beginning, deigned to become the Son of Man in these recent years. He did this although He who submitted to such great evils for our sake had done no evil and although we, who were the recipients of so much good at His hands, had done nothing to merit these benefits. Begotten by the Father, He was not made by the Father; He was made Man in the Mother whom He Himself had made, so that He might exist here for a while, sprung from her who could never and nowhere have existed except through His power."

No wonder Paul calls the Incarnation "the mystery of Godliness!" God was manifest in the flesh. The Gospel is proclaimed in the very name of the Son of God. His name is Jesus, which means Jehovah is Savior.

Matthew's Gospel records the following: An angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

The reality of God dwelling with His people and, conversely, His people dwelling with Him, is found throughout the Scriptures. Moses writes in Leviticus 26:11-12, "I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."

We rightly call this promise the "Immanuel Promise," for in it God promises to be "God with us." The promise was depicted vividly in both the Tabernacle and the Temple. When Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, dwelling in tents, God dwelt among His people in the Tabernacle – a tent. When Israel had fully subdued the Land of Canaan, and were dwelling in peace and rest under Solomon, God commanded His tent to be replaced with a Temple. Since His people were now dwelling permanently in houses in the Promised Land, He would now dwell in a House with them.

This promise is repeated numerous times in Scripture in many forms, and finds fulfillment in the Incarnation of Christ, the God-Man. The promise comes to ultimate fruition in the consummation of all things as recorded in Revelation 21:1-3, which reads: Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." You'll notice that this passage cites the Leviticus 26:11-12 promise.

Jesus, our Jehovah Savior, is born to save us from our sins. It took nothing less than "God manifest in the flesh," to purchase our pardon and peace with God. May we never be so foolish as to rely on our own power.

In Isaiah 31:1 God declares, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!"

Our Catechism teaches us that Jesus is called our Savior because He does, in very fact, save and deliver us from our sins. Therefore, we should not seek, nor can we find, salvation in any other. Furthermore, those who seek their salvation and welfare anywhere else but in Christ, and Christ alone, do not believe in Him at all, though they boast of Him in words. They indeed deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior. "For one of these two things must be true, either that Jesus is not a complete Savior, or that they who by a true faith receive this Savior must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation."

And so, we come full circle to the words of our text: I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior.

Jesus is our Savior because Jesus is God with us.

MEMORIAL SUNDAY OBSERVED

Our annual Memorial Sunday and Appreciation Sunday was held on November 21. A new sound system has been installed in the sanctuary. Memorial monies were given from the families of Keith Dewald, Alton Winckler, Loraine Weisser, and Meta Herr. Memorial money from Sharon Gall funded a new entrance gate at Lower Immanuel Cemetery.



REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Larry Schultz passed away on September 24. A memorial service was held on October 16th.

Violet Ehresmann went to her heavenly home on December 16. Funeral services were performed on December 21st.

Goldie Winckler passed from the loving arms of her family to her Almighty Father on December 22. Services were held on December 28th.

Those we love
don't go away,
they walk beside us
every day...
unseen, unheard,
but always near,
still loved,
still missed
and very dear.

Friedens' Nursing Home/Assisted Living Residents (With Addresses and Birthdays)

1. Maydean Dewald – Borman Manor; 501 N 4th St, Parkston, SD 57366 Birthday: Feb 13
2. Betty L. Meyer – 6301 W. 43rd St, Rm #4, Sioux Falls, SD 57106 Birthday: Aug 4
3. Elva Brosz – Avera Assisted Living; 400 W Fir St; Parkston, SD 57366 Birthday: Feb 22
4. Pauline Finck – Springfield Assisted Living, 701 Pine St, Springfield, SD 57062 Birthday: Nov 13

Friedens' Shut-ins

1. Janelle Meisenholder–101 S. Carpenter St, Tripp, SD 57376
2. Maynard Dewald–PO Box 152, Tripp, SD 57376
3. Sandra Stoebner–28209 SD Hwy 37, Parkston, SD 57366

SPECIAL PRAYERS FOR:

- 🕯️ Gary Stoebner - received a kidney transplant
- 🕯️ Karl Kuper – cancer has now spread to his brain
He is doing radiation treatments.

WATCH BULLETIN, WEBSITE &
FACEBOOK FOR UPCOMING EVENTS!

MISSION FEST HELD OCTOBER 17

Our speaker was Rev. Randall Klynsma from the Omaha Reformed Church, Omaha, Nebraska. Thank you Rev. Klynsma for the special message. A potluck was held after the service.

CHURCH SIGNS COMPLETE

All four signs have been mounted along Hwy 37 north and south of Tripp and Hwy 18 east and west of Tripp. Thank you Glen Dewald for your hard work. The signs look great!



POINSETTIAS GIVEN IN MEMORY

- ❖ Dean, Loris & Doug Doorn from Leon and Pat Reiner Family
- ❖ Gail Huether from Curtis Huether Family
- ❖ Elaine & Helmuth Stoebner and Irwin & Irene VandeGriend from Jerry and Brenda Stoebner
- ❖ Eldon & Peggy Schneider from Doris Schneider
- ❖ Ardina Huether & Carol Prien from Melvin Huether Family
- ❖ Outdoor greens for Ray O. & Evelyn Stoebner and Lawrence & Agnes Williams from Keith and Lynn Stoebner
- ❖ Bryan, Quinn, Hope, Eugene & Leontine Mehlhaff, William J. & Rita Hoff, Jan Weber, Lester & Mark Konechne, and Joanne Tieman from Lennis and Judy Mehlhaff Family
- ❖ Passed Loved Ones from the Stoebner Family

IMPORTANT DATES

Annual Meeting–January 19@7:30

Ash Wednesday–March 2

Lenten Services–March 9, 16, 23, 30,
and April 6

Maundy Thursday–April 14

Easter–April 17

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