

Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord
St. Matthew 1:18-25

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The prophet Isaiah foretold it: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) Matthew translates it for you: "God with us." This is what you heard about at the first Mid-week Advent service. Immanuel is an amazing thing—but so is a virgin conceiving!

A virgin conceiving?! That's not how this works. What does it mean? It means that the Son she carries is no ordinary Boy. He has no human father, which means that He has no direct human link to the fallen nature and sin of Adam. "From sire to son to bane descends," you have sung before, just as it is proclaimed in the Scriptures. (cf. Romans 5:12-14, 18-19) The rest of you have human fathers, so like your fathers before you, you have sin.

Though you may not share in the sin of Adam insofar as you may not have sinned exactly as he had, you do share in his sin in that you do transgress the Word of God, which Adam had done. He says, "Do this," and you do something else instead. He says, "Don't do that"—just as He told Adam and Eve not to eat from that certain tree—and you do it anyway. In the day that Adam and Eve ate of it, they died; oh, they didn't drop dead on the spot, but their eternal existence in the presence of God and their access to the tree of life was cut off, and years later they took their last breath. This death is consigned, therefore, to every descendant of Adam, you included, unless Someone intervenes.

But, is this Boy descended from Adam? Yes, for His mother is a daughter of Adam and Eve, fully human like her parents before her and their parents before them, all the way back to Adam and Eve. But she carried the promised Seed (cf. Genesis 3:15), the One who was to fulfill the Word of God being with His people, not just a presence at the Temple, but in the flesh—Immanuel, God with us. And, as you have heard time and again, His Father is God, the faithful, sinless Heavenly Father. When Luke lists the genealogy of Jesus, he says that Jesus is "the son of Adam, the son of God." (Luke 3:38)

So what does that make this Boy? He is fully God and fully man. There are no halfways here. He is a man in every respect as you are, except without sin. He is God, fully, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, true God of true God, beyond all comprehension on this side of eternity. This is the truth of Jesus that scandalized men like Arius, as you might recall from a Sunday sermon several days ago. Jesus is the intervention from God that you need.

He needed to be fully man in every respect as you are, so that He would fully identify with you. So, he was conceived and born as you were. He grew up and learned as you did. He ate and drank and slept as you do. And He died as others have and you someday will too. Every moment of your life is drawn up into His life, except your sinfulness.

Okay, well, not exactly. For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for you, that you might become the righteousness of God in Him. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21) He didn't identify with your sinfulness, for He Himself knew no sin. However, into His perfect flesh did this Boy assume your sin and sins, as well as the sin and sins of all mankind, from all ages. In another of those great mysteries surrounding this God-man, He took your sins from you, washed off of you, as it were, and onto Him. And, like Adam and Eve before Him, He died. He sacrificed Himself for them and for all—for you—with every last bit of sin that has ever been conceived and committed—He who was conceived and lived without sin and sins. He gave His life as your ransom, redeemed and released you from that bondage, in order that you would be with Him forever.

That little Boy was no ordinary Boy, and He grew up into no ordinary Man, and He remains no ordinary Man. He is God and man—Immanuel, God with us. All of this means that the eternal God is a man who grew and aged, that the all-powerful God is a man who became tired and weak and hungry, that the ever-living God is the man who gave His life on the cross and died.

He is Immanuel, God with us. Tonight, you celebrate His birth in the little town of Bethlehem—the House of Bread—but such is always done with an eye toward His entire life and death. For, this little Boy, who is Immanuel and the Bread of Life, is your Savior, your freedom, your Life and your Light. In Him you have redemption, the forgiveness of all of your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.