TITLE: The Incarnation

TEXT: Is. 7:14; Ro. 3:23-24, 6:23; James 1:13; Mk. 1:12-13; Heb. 4:14-16, 2:18; 2 Co. 5:21

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about the incarnation. The incarnation is, I believe, the most wondrous and mind boggling truth to be found in Scripture.

The word incarnation means:

**A bodily manifestation of a supernatural being.**

**Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)** **14Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

The word Immanuel literally translates: with us is God or God with us!

It speaks of the incarnation. God with us! A bodily manifestation of a supernatural being…

This morning I want to look at the purpose of the incarnation. The real reason for God becoming one of us, manifesting Himself in human form…

Why that was necessary.

It was necessary because of sin and because of divine justice.

 Man was created in the image and likeness of God. Man was created sinless.

 Through yielding to temptation man became a sinner.

 God said: thou shall not eat---man disobeyed and ate.

 Divine justice said that when you disobey you will surely die..

 That death being two fold…You will one day die physically and you will die spiritually the instant that you sin.

 So in the day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit there was an instant death.

 They died spiritually the moment that they sinned. The spirit of Himself that God had breathed within man at creation had to leave. And then man started to die physically. Divine justice demanded it…

God had said: In the day that you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will surely die.

 When they ate from it they died spiritually, fellowship with God was broken at that instant, and they started to die physically.

 A universal law that God had put into His design of creation was that everything would beget things of their own kind.

 In procreation, everything would beget things of their own kind.

 Dogs would beget dogs, cats would beget cats and human beings would beget human beings. Sinful human beings would beget sinful human beings. Everything would produce things of their own kind.

 Adam and Eve sinned before they had their first child so when they started having children they had already been infected by sin and they passed that infection on to their children and their children passed the infection of sin on to their children after them…Thus the whole human race has been infected.

That is why Scripture says:

**Romans 3:23 (NIV) 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!**

 All have been infected by sin so all are sinners and fall under sins curse. The curse of this two-fold death.

 Spiritual death and physically dying..

Do you know when the death process starts for each of us?

 At conception! The moment that we are conceived we start to die! At conception the countdown to death starts!

So we start out life in a hole, if you will.

 We start out spiritually dead and physically dying!

Divine justice demanded it!

**Romans 6:23 (NIV)** **23For the wages of sin is death**!

All have sinned so all will die! All have sinned so all are spiritually dead. That is divine justice, Righteous justice, for breaking the covenant and sinning against an all holy, all righteous God.

But aren’t you thankful this morning for Divine mercy and Divine grace!

**Romans 3:23 - 24 (NIV) 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,****24and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

That is divine mercy and divine grace!

Being **justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

 After Adam and Eve sinned there was a big problem..

Sinless man had sinned and divine justice demanded that the only answer would be for a sinless man to come and offer his life as a sacrifice for man’s sin.

The problem, from man’s perspective, was that after man had sinned and then started procreating others of his own kind, children born with a sinful nature, there was no longer any hope or possibility for a sinless man to be born.

Because things will only produce things of their own kind.

 And this is where the beauty and wonder of the incarnation comes in to play.

Immanuel, God with us!

Man had sinned and could never pay the price necessary to redeem himself.

 Because God so loved us He knew that if the price of man’s redemption would be paid He would have to pay that price Himself.

He would have to come down and literally become one of us and then willingly lay down His life for us.

 And that is what the incarnation is all about.

**The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son and his name will be called Immanuel!** God is with us!

In 1873 a Belgian Catholic Priest named Joseph Damien de Veuster was sent to minister to lepers on the Hawaiian Islands. When he arrived he immediately began to meet each of the lepers in the colony in hopes of building a relationship and a ministry. Wherever he turned people shunned him. It seemed as though every door to ministry was closed. He poured his life into his work, erecting a chapel and beginning worship services and pouring out his heart to the lepers. But it was to no avail! No one responded to his ministry. After 12 years of rejection and failure Father Damien decided to leave.

 Dejected, he made his way to the docks to board a ship to take him back home to Belgium. As he stood on the dock he wrung his hands nervously as he recounted his futile ministry among the lepers. As he did he looked down at his hands…he noticed some mysterious white spots and felt some numbness. Almost immediately he knew what was happening to his body. He had contracted leprosy! He was now himself a leper!

 It was at that moment that he knew what he had to do. He returned to the leper colony and to his work. Quickly the word spread about his disease through the colony. Within a matter of hours everyone knew. Hundreds of them gathered outside his hut. They understood his pain, fear, and uncertainty about the future. But the biggest surprise was the following Sunday as Father Damien arrived at the chapel to conduct the morning service. He found hundreds of worshippers already there.

 By the time the services began there was standing room only….the place was packed with people and many more were gathered outside the chapel.

 The rest is history! Father Damien had a ministry that became enormously successful.

 What was the reason for father Damien’s ultimate success? A simple concept—Identity-- Identifying with the afflicted. Father Damien had literally become one of them!

 He understood them; he hurt with them and was able to truly empathize with them. There was now an identity, a connection.

 There was no longer any question if he cared for them or not…

 This is the reason why Christ came to us through the incarnation. Identity! Being able to identify with the inflicted in their afflictions.

 The only way that God could truly identify with us was to become one of us.

 Scripture says that God cannot be tempted by sin!

**James 1:13 (NIV) 13When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone!**

God cannot be tempted by evil! Since He cannot be tempted He could not truly identify with mankind..

So to be able to fully identify with us He allowed Himself to become one of us!

In speaking about the incarnation of the God of creation, Jesus Christ….Mark says this:

**Mark 1:12 - 13 (NIV) 12At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan.**

And it was because Christ was tempted that He could and can truly identify with us in our temptations and our sufferings.

**Hebrews 4:15 (NIV) 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.**

WOW! Did you catch that? Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are!

What does that mean that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are?

Jesus was tempted to disobey God the Father!

Jesus was tempted to curse!

Jesus was tempted to be dishonest? He was tempted to cheat on his income tax? To withhold from Caesar what belonged to Caesar!

Jesus was tempted to gossip! Jesus was tempted to lie!

If Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are then Jesus was tempted to sin sexually!

Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are yet He was without sin!

Jesus never yielded to the temptation. So Jesus never sinned…

**Hebrews 2:18 (NIV)**

**18Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

How? Because Jesus can identify with us in our temptations! He knows what it is like! He knows how strong a temptation can be and how hard it can be to resist!

EXAMPLE: God has seemed to give me a ministry with the chemically addicted through the jail ministry and when I was chaplain for the bridge.

 This particular type of ministry is probably not for everyone.

 I can minister to these kinds of people because I have been tempted by the same kinds of things in my life so I can identify with them in their temptations…

I know what it is like, as a young person, to have alcohol take more of a priority in my life then it should have!

I also know what it is like to have God deliver you from the power that it has over you.

If a person has never really been tempted with substance then it will be harder for that person to identify with someone who is having a problem in that area of their life!

But the point is we have all been tempted and we all have fallen to temptation in some area of our life and God can use that part of our past to help those around us who are going through the same things now!

We can help them because we can identify with them in their struggles! Identification brings about empathy and understanding! We have been there! We know what the particular temptation is like! We understand what pain and hurt is involved in a particular struggle!

If you are building a deck for the first time and really don’t know what you are doing and decide that you need help and you have two friends, one who never built a deck or built anything else for that matter and you have another friend that has built several decks in his life---which one will you most likely go to for help?

I am going to call on the one who has done it before! ( Randy-come over hand help me build my deck)

Why? Because he can identify with the struggle that I am having and will be able to give me some advice that will help! He has been there and done that! He can identify with my struggle!

Jesus has been tempted in every way, just as we are, and because He has, He can identify with us in whatever temptation we may be going through!

The incarnation, God becoming flesh, is what made that identification with us possible.

 I once heard a man say: But God doesn’t understand the pain that I am going through!

That is an absurd statement! What do you mean God doesn’t understand the pain that we may be going through?

God is an expert in the area of bearing pain!

When He came to earth He was rejected by men! He was misunderstood, mistreated, abused, hated without cause, lied to, spit upon, cursed, beaten mercilessly with a whip and nailed to a cross where he was crucified!

What do we mean Jesus cannot identify with our pain?

If anything, we will never fully be able to identify with Him in His pain but He certainly can identify with us in ours…

We will never be able to fully identify ourselves with Him and His sufferings because when He suffered He was 100 % innocent….

 It is one thing to suffer for doing wrong and something else to suffer when you have done no wrong, suffer when you are 100% innocent!

We may have suffered for something that we didn’t do in this life but none of us are 100% innocent.

Innocent is not something that any of us are!

The incarnation was necessary because none of us are innocent and we all have divine justice hanging over our heads…

But within the incarnation what we see is divine grace and divine mercy given us to satisfy divine justice..

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)** **21God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

**God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God!**

The real agony of the cross was not the crown of thorns, nor the lashes of the whip---the real agony of the cross was not even in the nails driven through His hands and feet and then being hoisted into the air to die----

 The real agony of the cross was that He who had no sin of his own took on all of your sin and my sin upon himself…

 The agony of the cross was when the Father had to turn His head away from the Son as He became the sin bearer of all the sins of the world….

Sinless man sinned and brought about separation from God and the curse of Divine justice---

Through the incarnation we have been given Immanuel, God with us!

Through the incarnation sinless man, Jesus, came to pay sins price and satisfy Divine justice so that we wouldn’t have to pay that price ourselves..

**Hebrews 4:15 -16 (NIV) 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.****16Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

 Again, I believe the incarnation is probably the most beautiful and wondrous truth of Scripture…

Immanuel! God with us!

 God came to identify with us in our weaknesses, bearing the consequence and paying the price of our sins so that we can approach His throne of grace with confidence and receive His mercy and find the grace that will help us in our times of need.

Do you see, do you recognize the wonder and beauty of the incarnation?

This morning have you embraced the incarnation?

 Has divine justice been satisfied for your life and have you received divine mercy and divine grace in its stead?

Have you personalized Immanuel?

Is it not just “God with us” but have you made Him “God with me!”

 Have you surrender your life to the one who gave His life for you allowing Him to become Immanuel to you?

 The wonder and beauty of the incarnation is that even if you were the only person on earth God wouldn’t have changed a thing! Jesus still would have come in the flesh to pay the price of Divine Justice for you! He still would have come to be tempted in every way just as you are and then offer Himself up as the atoning sacrifice for your sin so that you could boldly come before the throne of grace and renew your relationship with the Father!

 How have you responded to the incarnation this morning?