

Sermon: He Shall Be Called Immanuel
Scriptures: Isaiah 7:10-17; Matthew 1:18-25
Sunday, December 15, 2019 at the 8:00 a.m. Worship at The First
Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Introduction: One of the great themes of Advent and Christmas is the Virgin Birth of Jesus, that one of the unusual characteristics of this episode is that Jesus was not conceived in the usual way. This is something that has both precedent and meaning in Scripture. It come in play when we consider who we are and who is Christ.

Set the stage: In the days of the Lord Jesus, betrothal was as binding as marriage and could only be broken via divorce, so Joseph must have had divorce in mind when he realized that Mary was expecting. Perhaps he did not believe the story about the angel Gabriel and that she was still a virgin, as he had decided to divorce her but do it quietly, in order to shield Mary from dangerous public scrutiny. An angel appears to him in a dream and changed his mind when he confirmed her story and told him that this fulfills a prophecy from Isaiah, that a virgin will bear a son, and his name will be Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

the historical background-a miracle was needed
If you read the original passage in Isaiah 7, Israel's King Ahaz, an ungodly man who trusts in political alliances more than he trusts the Lord, refuses to ask for a sign from the Lord when in need of deliverance from enemies of the nation. It was not out of modesty but out of irreverence. The king has no regard for God. So the Lord gives him a sign of a virgin giving birth to a child named Immanuel. By the time Immanuel becomes a toddler, these enemies of the nation will be vanquished. The prophecy is re-applied, and more profoundly applied, with the birth of Jesus. Here's the significance of these events.

We need a Savior that is both human and divine.
Theologian Carl Henry wrote this: "No, the point is that though the Son of Mary as such stands in solidarity with sinners, yet his real birth is

directly from God, so that unlike all others he is not himself a sinner, but has come to bear their sin in god's own work of salvation. A man born in the normal way could have been one with sinners, but he could not have been the sinless sin-bearer. The sinless sin-bearer comes into the world in such a way that he is also one with man, yet there is a decisive break with the old humanity as well as continuity with it. He is not sinful man accomplishing in a more worthy representative his own salvation. He is the second man, the Lord from heaven, the Son of Man who is also the Son of God incarnate for us men and for our salvation.”*

Conclusion: According to Ephesians 5:25-27 Jesus loves us and gave Himself for us for a purpose. The purpose is that He might sanctify and cleans us with the washing of water by the word, that He might present us to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle. In order to do this He joins the human race as only a human can, and then does what only God can do.

* Erickson-Man's Need and God's Gift p. 313 Carl F.H. Henry “The Lord's Virgin Birth”