

**May I never boast...
except...
in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Date: 28 November 2021
Service/s: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Who is Jesus?
Title: God in skin?
Passage: Luke 1:26-38

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We are spending the four Sundays in Advent AND the Christmas services exploring a very relevant and important question:

- **WHO IS JESUS?**
- Now you've heard me say before that ADVENT is **NOT** a **countdown** to **Christmas**...
- ...but a **really significant time** reminding us of the reality that **Jesus is coming**...
- ...coming not as a **baby** – that **already happened!**
- ...but coming **back** to us to **right** all **wrongs**... bring **justice** – put down **evil** and usher in the **new heavens and the new earth** – the new **creation!! //**
- The period we call **Advent** is meant to lift our eyes from the **challenges** and **griefs** of **THIS world** to the **joy** and **hope** of the **NEXT!**
- And then after four weeks of thinking about Jesus' **return** we celebrate **Christmas //** because his **first coming** was a down **payment** – a **guarantee** of his coming **again... //**
- So **LAST** Advent – do you remember that far back ☺ – we explored Jesus' coming – under the heading “**a day is coming**” // and we explored in that series – how
 - We will be with the Lord forever
 - We don't know when
 - Where IS this coming?
 - Life in the mean time
- This year however, I want to take a **different approach... //**
- In the world you and I live... there will be **so much fuss made about Christmas**... the **ads** on **TV** will drive us all crazy... **Christmas music** in the shops... the **amount** of money **spent**...
- And while for US – we want to focus on **Jesus**... yet for **most** in the world around us – he's totally **irrelevant** to the **entire celebration**...!
- And I find sometimes even for **Christians** – WE are so easily **distracted** by the **preparations** that **WE** lose sight of what Christmas is actually **about**... //
- So I want this Advent to go back to **basics**... and to help us focus on Jesus... I want to **explore** with you the important question – **who IS Jesus?**
- So over the four weeks of Advent – and then into Christmas **itself** – here is where I'm heading
- **WHO is Jesus?** Well:
 - He's God in skin
 - God making himself known
 - God with us

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- God dealing with our sin
- And Saviour of the World... ///

- **Today** then – who is Jesus? – he in God in **skin** //
- God in **human flesh**
- God as **one of us**
- And here is how we are going to tackle this:
 1. What does the Bible actually **say**?
 2. Is it **true**?
 3. Does it **matter**?
- So

1. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY?

- Only **two** out of the four gospels include descriptions of Jesus' **birth**...
- **Matthew** and **Luke**
- **Matthew** tells **Joseph's** story
- **Luke** tells **Mary's** story
- but they **both** tell us that there was something very **unique** about Jesus' birth... well – not so much about his birth – but about his **conception!** //
- Namely... that **Jesus** was **conceived** by the **Holy Spirit**...
- Luke 1:31ff - have a look with me at what the angel said to Mary in v31: ³¹ *You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.*
- Now - Mary is **pledged** to be married – but **not-yet** married... which means (esp in that time and in that culture) she would be a **virgin**... but in case we're in any doubt – we're told **three** times... twice by Luke in **v27** and once from Mary's own lips in **v34**.
Have a look: v34: ³⁴ *'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'*
³⁵ *The angel answered, 'The **Holy Spirit** will come on **you**, and the power of the **Most High** will **overshadow** you. So the **holy one** to be **born** will be called^[b] the **Son of God**.*
- It's almost **understated** isn't it?
- There's no **fanfare**... no **trumpets**... almost **matter of fact**...
- ...and as if to second-guess that Mary might think that this is a **bit too hard for God**, Gabriel informs Mary that her relative Elizabeth who is (a) old and (b) supposedly infertile, is now 6 months pregnant - **for no word from God will ever fail!**
- ...inference? – if no word from God will ever fail, **Mary** having a child by the **Holy Spirit** – **before** she has slept with **Joseph** or **anyone else** – is no **problem**. //
- Now - do you understand what this **meant** for **Mary**?
- Can you imagine what it was like to tell Joseph... "Joseph – guess what – I'm **pregnant**....!"
- **Adultery** was punishable by **stoning**...

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- And to **end** a betrothable required **divorce!** //
- but note the way Mary responds to this – its staggering! ... she simply says – 38 – *I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled.*
- *I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled...* Older NIV – *may it be to be as you have said...*
- ...simple but profound **surrender** and **obedience**...
- that **has** to be a model for our surrender to God!! //
- Well – let's now see **Joseph's** story... //
- Matthew 1 v18 – *before [Mary and Joseph] came together, she was found to be **with child through the Holy Spirit...*** //
- Joseph thought to just go quietly... but an angel now appears to **him** and says – v20 - *Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because **what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit...***
- **So twice it is made abundantly clear – that what is conceived in Mary is 'from the Holy Spirit' ///**
- So two out of four gospels tell us of Jesus' birth - they are independent accounts – no common material – **both** tell the story differently – **one** focusing on **Mary** the **other** on **Joseph**... but both **entirely consistent**... in **complete agreement**... that:
- ... **Mary** at this point was a **virgin**
- Mary is to become – then was discovered – **pregnant**.
- **How?** Only by the **miraculous work** of the **Holy Spirit**...
- And as a result this child will very special...
- Luke – he will be *called the **Son of the Most High** – reign on the **throne of David** and over the **house of Jacob forever... his kingdom will never end...***
- Matthew – *he will **save his people from their sins** – and quoting Isaiah – they will call him **Immanuel** which means **God with us!** ///* - more on both those phrases later in the series...
- So the **clear message is** – **Jesus is God in skin!** //
- **God turned up here in person!** ///
- **THAT** is what we are about to **celebrate**.
- Not some fictional fairy-tale to make us feel better about life
- But the absolute **reality** – that because he was conceived of the **Holy Spirit** and born of the **virgin Mary** – you can be **sure** – **Jesus is God / in skin...** //

- But here's now next question and it's important...

2. IS IT TRUE?

- We have no **reason** to doubt the truth of these accounts and every reason to accept them as **truth**
- Here are some thoughts
 1. First, we recall with gratitude, that the New Testament documents are considered to be among the

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most reliable in the ancient world... why? Number of copies in existence and the short space of time between when the originals were penned and the copies.

and so we believe that what is written in the New Testament documents are **accurate accounts of reality...**

2. If one were to decide **this** bit of the account is **not true**, how then do you decide if **any** of the account of Jesus is true?

if there are bits you think you don't **like** or can't **accept**, then what reason would you have for considering **any** of it to be true... ?

if Jesus was *not* conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.... Then – was he born at **all**?

did he turn water into wine?
did he make the lame walk?
did he hang out with sinners and tax collectors?
did he speak the truth?
did he reveal the Father?
did he die for sin?
did he rise again?

surely if the **virgin birth** is up for grabs – then it's **all** up for **grabs**?

3. If you were making this up, what would be the **motive** for including something like a **virgin birth** that is going to seem to be so **unbelievable**? Why wouldn't you concoct a more **likely** scenario?

It's the same issue isn't it of Jesus clashing with the religious leaders so dramatically; of being critical of his disciples, of walking on water, or having **women** as the **first** people to see the **resurrected Jesus...**

if you were making this **up** – you wouldn't include **anything** that was going to cause people to **doubt** it or **question** it because you'd want the **strongest buy-in possible!**

4. With the angel, surely **WE** believe nothing is impossible for God...! so we do in fact believe that the God who brought the whole creation into being can then by his power and authority, be at work in the womb of a virgin so that she bears a son to save the world... !

It's the age long question of how big is your God?

if he's big enough to be **creator**... big enough to **raise the dead**... then he's **big enough** for a **virgin birth!**

5. It is consistent with other parts of Scripture which teach us that the Son of God was with the Father from eternity and that it was by this humble, glorious means that the Son let **go** of equality with God and took human form to serve us by being obedient to death even death on a cross (Phil 2)

so – yes – we want to say – **OF COURSE IT'S TRUE!!!**

And this brings us finally then to the question:

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3. DOES IT MATTER?

- Does it matter that God stepped into our world in skin!
- Here is just SOME of what it means for us...

1. It reveals God's love

- ...for God SO loved the world that he gave his one and only son... **THIS** is the means by which he gave us his Son... // oh the **depths** of his **love** for us...

2. It reveals JESUS' heart

- ...did not consider equality something to be used for his own advantage...
- being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
- What heart he had for us that he would, as it were, stoop so low!
- Does it matter? Well it reminds us that:

3. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice

- John testified: *And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin* (1 John 3:5).
- Without the sinlessness of Christ there would be no salvation.
- God required a sacrifice that was without blemish, (Exodus 12:5).
- If Jesus were a **sinner** in any sense of the word, then He could not provide salvation for us.
- However, because He came into the world by supernatural means and lived a sinless life, he could BE that sacrifice for our sins without **spot** and without **blemish**. //

4. Jesus get us

- He knows our every need
- Hebrews 2 – *because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted*
- Hebrews 4 - *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*
- And the outworking of that is this: ¹⁶ *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*
- We can approach him because he get us... he knows us
- He has experienced life as we know it...
- Not a distant and remote or disconnected God...
- He's one of us... he's walked this planet...
- That's just SOME of why it matters... that Jesus is God in skin!

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- Brother and sisters... who is Jesus?
 - God in skin!
 - **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?** The Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
 - Is it **TRUE?**
 - Yes, the Bible it **proclaims** and **explains** it and we can rely on what the **Bible says**.... If you've seen me, you've seen the Father says Jesus...
 - Does it **MATTER?** //
 - Yes – because we clearly understand that **God became man**
 - It shows us God's **heart** for us...
 - ...and **Jesus'** heart for us...
 - By means of this unique status he was qualified as sinless to offer the one true sacrifice for sin
 - And because he **became** human – and still **IS** human in the eternal presence of the Father...

He is able to **sympathise** with our every weakness

Understand every **temptation**

And know us as human beings, **through** and **through**...

Who is Jesus....?

keep asking that question this Christmas.... Maybe **ask** your non-Christian family and friends – so – who do **you** think Jesus is? //

They may just ask you **back** – and **you** – who do **YOU** say he is?? // And you can say – well – let me tell you – he's God in **skin**!!