

December 4, 2011 How God Becomes Human
Luke 1:35-38

Reading of Luke 1:35-38

We have entitled the Christmas sermon series as “A Christmas to Treasure.” Our hope is that through the worship services we have including Christmas Sunday, we will experience a gift from God, whether that gift might come in the form of some insight or understanding and we will treasure it because it draws us closer to him.

Last Sunday the message stressed that it just could be the inconveniences of life where God does his best work in our lives. He doesn't necessarily cause them such as he did Mary's conception of Jesus, but he definitely can work through them. Our spiritual riches can be discovering God's gifts to us in the inconveniences we want to throw out of our lives like junk mail.

Today I hope we can go a step further and find that something to treasure at Christmas is understanding more of what it means how God becomes human in us. We focus an awful lot on God becoming human in Jesus but that is not the end of the story. There is a reason why Jesus became human in the first place. There is a meaning to one word that perhaps many here are not familiar with and it is the word “incarnation.” **Incarnation means that something spiritual non physical has taken life in flesh and blood.** We often hear people describe someone and they say, “they are their daddy, their mother made over. That is getting close to the meaning of incarnation as someone's personality whether it's their temper, humor, skill, or voice has taken life in another person so much there is no denying the two are related. **Incarnation happens when God's attributes take life in us God becomes human.**

I hope this Christmas a gift to treasure is to discover how the divine ways of God can take life in us. The Bible's teachings of how God becomes human are not just a bunch of stories from people who wrote their own ideas of how God works. Because the Bible is honest, that when God takes life in us in ways that nobody could deny the connection, it is not necessarily the experience we may at first want to seek or consider a treasure.

Pastor and author Adam Hamilton tells about a church that was organizing a Christmas play with kids. Dozens of children had come to tryout for the parts so they would get a chance to sing and dance in the play and they would get to dress up in elaborate costumes being the wise men and shepherds. None of the boys were fighting over the chance to play Joseph, because Joseph the earthly father of Jesus had no lines. But when the director asked who wants to be Mary, hands shot among just about all the girls who came to tryout. Mary had the starring role in the play and almost all the girls wanted to play Mary.

However as we think about Mary historically, biblically and practically we know Mary's starring role came with a cost. And that is truth about life that if embraced will ultimately bring us much more reward that last for eternity; but if denied, that denial leads to emptiness.

New Testament scholar William Barclay once said, **“God does not choose a person for ease and comfort and selfish joy but for a task that will take all the head, heart and hand can bring to it.”** (The Journey by Adam Hamilton, p.68)

One pastor made a good statement when he said so often we talk about being blessed when we gain money, power or prestige. We associate blessedness with comfort. We describe being blessed talking about homes, careers, and good health. We hear athletes talk about being blessed with talent but unfortunately many of

those same athletes are also in the news for all the wrong reasons.

But Mary was blessed because God chose her to be a part of his plan to become human in Jesus. She considered her self blessed even though she and Joseph would not experience comfort; but face the whispers behind their back about her pregnancy, the baby would be born in cave, and they would even have to be refugees in another country just to protect the baby's life. (Hamilton p.67)

Mary was chosen because she had a heart that made room for Jesus before he ever took life in her womb. God becomes human in us when our hearts beat with those same qualities.

I

God becomes human when we trust his spirit comes to us. V.35

In Luke chapter one verse 34 is where Mary asked the angel how this miraculous pregnancy could happen. In verse 35 the angel begin to explain. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you..." Now there is more that the angel will say the Holy Spirit will do. But the first thing that Mary had to decide is whether the power of God was with her in this world. She had to have a heart that believed the Holy Spirit, or God's presence works in this life.

When the angel says the Holy Spirit will come upon you that's important. He is not saying that Mary needs first do something. Mary doesn't need to read just the right book to get ready for this experience, hear the right sermon, even wait for the right crisis to bring her to her knees, or go channel surfing on tv or internet for the right preacher to tell her what she wants to hear. The angel said, God will over shadow you, God will take the initiative, the first step another way we describe what we often call prevenient grace. Prevenient grace means God always makes the first move to us and we see that in Mary's story as part of God becoming human in Jesus.

God becomes human in us when our hearts trust God who

Acts first

Prompts us with inspiration
Moves us to care
Initiates the restlessness in our hearts
God speaks first

This is one reason why the prayer group on Wednesday night was began. It's only about 3 years over due from a goal that I had on my pastoral goals for the church. I know other groups are praying, but right now what this group of 2 other guys and myself are doing is praying for people and their situation but especially praying for us to recognize how God is seeking to move in us as church. When a real movement of God comes, a real invitation from God comes, it comes from him first; not just an idea or strategy we can develop. If a real thing of God is going to act in our lives personally or as a church it is a **Luke 35 thing God will come upon you/us.**

II

God becomes human in us as his power floods our lives v.35
If we say but how did Mary know and how will we know that God is speaking, God is taking the first step he is prompting and it is more than just what I want or a personal agenda. Let's face it many people will even justify bad behavior by claiming God told them to do something or God knows their heart. Did you hear about the suspension of a Detroit Lions defensive lineman for stomping on a player's arm after the play was over in the football game televised Thanksgiving Day. The guilty lineman was kicked out of the game but when he was interviewed after the game, he tried to say his actions were innocent and then he said, "The man up stairs knows what I did wasn't wrong." Well how do you dispute that?

For me the help we find as an answer is in the rest of verse 35. The angel told Mary, "**the power of the Holy spirit will overshadow you.**" **When something overshadows us that is another way of saying, it impacts every aspect of my life.** When God's spirit is inviting us it is like a light that just totally floods

over us. There will be no places in our lives it cannot reach. We will be miserable if we try to act Christian only when we're around Christians. When God's spirit is over shadowing us it means we keep bumping into the reminders from God. We will not settle for the dual life style of Christian behavior only on Sunday mornings.

God becomes human in us when 24/7 he is center of our lives our motivations. Someone said that God becomes incarnated in us when our response to God contain two words "I'm in." the question is do you have that type of relationship where you are seeking for God's presence to move through any and every aspect of your life?

III

God becomes human in us when we trust he is a God of possibilities. V.37

The angel then told Mary what was told to Abram and Sari when they laughed at the news they would have a baby in old age. In verse 37, the angel told Mary, "**that noting is impossible with God.**" God becomes human in us when we live by a faith that believes noting is impossible for God to do. The canyon between the divine and human has a bridge when we believe that nothing is impossible with God. And notice that the angel didn't say all things are promised, just that nothing is beyond the possibility of happening with the power of God at work. Mary had a heart that was open to possibilities. She was willing to move forward trusting God's possibilities. In the Greek the word impossible means God's power can act on any thing of this world. (Vine's N.T. Dictionary.)

God becomes human when we are open to possibilities of what God could do instead of focusing only on what we think God won't do. God becomes human when we risk failing because we trust God enough to come through.

IV

God becomes human in us when we desire to be his servants.

V.38

Mary's response to the message of the angel was, "here I am a servant of the Lord." The way God became human in Jesus was because Mary **saw her self as a servant of the Lord.** The way God becomes human in us is when we live a lifestyle as a servant. We live as slaves for him, not volunteers because volunteers have the option to jump in and out when convenient; but a servant sees themselves obligated to their master. This is the part of the Christmas story that if we were trying out to play Mary we would take our hands down and say, I don't know if I want to play the part of Mary that badly?

The Apostle Paul wrote why we should see ourselves as servants when he said, **"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave..."** **Philippians 2:6-7**
Jesus saw himself as a slave.

The mind and heart of a slave is how God becomes human in us. God becomes human in when we see ourselves as slaves to God; not when we see our selves as Christians, pastors, chairs of certain committees, people of certain power, long time members but slaves. God becomes human in us when we do like Mary and Jesus and empty out our self will and seek to be obedient to God.

And the truth is at the very moment when God is showing himself through us we may not always recognize it or feel it. People around us might make the connection between us and God more than we can.

Those receiving the Christmas cards from the Genesis class might see God more in you than those giving the cards.

This past Wednesday Alma Ruth Michael and I took 5 of our youth

to Reel Foot Rural Ministry to help them set up their Christmas store. One of the staff told me Wednesday that they will service over 100 families per day once they open the store. We all worked hard that day including the kids, they did great job. You see a couple of pictures of them at work. (picture of kids)

I don't know if they especially felt at that moment like God was becoming human in them as they did something that served and will ministered to others. I know there might be some one who could see God in them. I saw some people come to the office they were being screened for whether they would qualify to shop at Reelfoot for their families. Maybe the people who came in need of help and hope might see God in those who served by stocking shelves and sorting toys.

Thursday night was the parade here in Newbern. I was one of three people who walked along side of the float to make sure our lights that stick out from the float didn't get too close to people standing along the parade route. Actually we made sure Gerald Tidwell's driving skills didn't cause the float to hit anyone. But as we rounded the corner just past the railroad tracks, there was this little girl who was all bundled up and her hands were barley touching one another and she was looking up at the manger and it looked like to me the manger scene absolutely captivated her thoughts. I don't know if some of you who worked on the float long hours, donated supplies or money felt like God was becoming human in you as you served, but I wonder what the opinion of that little girl and her parents might be or others along the parade route about those who would take the time to create a float with such a message of happy birthday Jesus?

The treasure we find at Christmas and everyday is that God becomes human in us when our greatest desire is to be his servant following the power of his spirit.

We are reminded of that truth as we celebrate the Lord's Supper and remember Jesus was a servant even unto to death for us. He is present with us as we celebrate his sacrifice calling us to becomes servants.