

Who is Jesus? Man – Galatians 4:4

In the year 2024 a man named Russ Cook did something no human has ever done before. He successfully ran the entire length of the continent of Africa from South Africa to Tunisia. It took him 352 days, averaging 28 miles a day. I love stuff like this because I like to be amazed by the human capacity for unreal feats of physical endurance and strength. But it's not just the physical stuff that gets me. I've been listening to classical music a lot more recently as I work and study and it's shocking the skill and mastery that goes into creating beautiful music. The overlapping of melody and harmony and the way it evokes emotions. Love it.

While humans are capable of so many amazing things we often allow our capacities to be placed in the service of incredible evil. Theft, murder, wars, and manipulation. There's a reason we are called the glory and garbage of the universe.

Despite our incredible talents, history has shown that we do not have the ability to reform ourselves and remove the garbage from our identity. We have tried all sorts of different forms of government, education, therapy, and scientific advancements, but we can't seem to save ourselves and make things right in the world and with each other.

What we require is help from outside, from God, which is what Trevor talked about last week. We are asking the question, Who is Jesus? And the answer last week was unequivocally God. But that's not the only answer because as human beings we need a human representative before God. In other words, we need help from outside and from inside. And so, it's vital that if Jesus will save us, which is what we talk about next week, that He genuinely be both God and man. Here's how the Nicene Creed puts this:

"We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all ages, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten, not made, having the same being as the Father, through whom all things came to be;

Who for us human beings and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human..."

He was incarnate. True God of True God became man and this week I want to give you **3 Reasons to Rejoice in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.**

1. Exact Moment

Hopefully you are already parked in Galatians 4. This morning we are going to limit ourselves to only verse 4 and next week we will look at verses 5-7. You can see that verse 4 starts with the word “but” and so the author, Paul, is giving us a contrast here to what’s come before. Let me give you a brief big picture idea of what’s happening in this book so far.

Paul's purpose in the book of Galatians is to ensure that the Galatian believers are not believing a different gospel than the one he preached. 1:6-9. There were some who were relying on the "works of the law" to ensure salvation and growth. Paul wants to proclaim the truth of justification by faith to them. Listen to 2:15-16.

We are justified, or declared righteous, despite our sinfulness, through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ brings us into a new relationship with God. Listen to 3:26. The law can’t do this work because the law brings a curse on us because we can never keep it because we are sinful. Paul has described the giving of the law to Israel as a guardian or school master to prepare them for the coming of Jesus. (3:23-24) He goes back to this picture in 4:1-2 and then says that even the Gentiles who have never been Jews under the Old Covenant were enslaved to sin in verse 3. None of us can keep God’s law whether Jew or Gentile. We are all separated from God because of our sin.

This is the point where Paul pivots from the curse of sin and the slavery it brings to the action of God to rescue human beings from sin. Look at the first phrase in verse 4.

The idea here is that the appointed time has arrived. Sometimes people will say that Jesus’s birth was perfectly timed because of things like the Pax Romana, the universal language of Greek, and the ability to travel had never been easier. It was the perfect time for God to send His Messiah. All of these things may be true, but ultimately this means that God’s timing was here. His appointed plan had reached the right moment. I think a parallel idea is what Jesus preached in Mark 1:15.

The entire OT pointed toward this moment. The giving of the law, the sin of Israel, the promises and covenants, the types, shadows and plans had reached their

fulfillment. The transition between the ages had come. It was time for God to act and bring about the final stage of salvation history. And what does God do to intervene and bring about the final act of the drama of salvation?

2. Extravagant Mission

Look at the next phrase of verse 4. This is the action of God. The work of redemption begins with God, not with us. It's vital that you understand that at no time has God been under any obligation to save you or to save anyone. We tend to think highly of ourselves and think we are somehow deserving and worthy of being saved from our sin, but this just isn't the case. God, in eternity past, decided to save you, to come for you because you could not save yourself.

Think of how often in Scripture the giving originates with God in heaven. Creation happens because God makes it happen. God gives Adam and Eve a garden, a task, each other. He gives Israel His law and His covenants. He reveals Himself. He gives the mountains, the rivers, the rain, and the goodness of food for all His creatures. The relationship between heaven and earth is one of giver and recipient. But so often our posture is to reject the gifts of God or imagine that we gave ourselves these gifts. It's insane.

But what exactly was this gift or better put, who was sent on this mission? It was God's Son. This points to the deity of the Son and the Nicene Creed that we read earlier makes this quite clear. "Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God...Light from Light, True God from True God..."

In eternity past the Triune God existed in perfect harmony and happiness. One God. Three Persons. Father, Son and Spirit. The Son came down from heaven, but He did not come begrudgingly. He chose to come. He humbled Himself and came and He came because He is the Son. He is one with the Father and they share the same will and the same plan, but the Father's role is to send, and the Son's role is to be sent. He left the glories of heaven to come. He carried out the mission of the Triune God to save His people and restore creation.

"When we repeat the New Testament phrase 'God sent his Son' we are talking about God and at the same time narrating a story that happened in our worldly time and space. It is the story of the living God who decided to live in our world in Jesus of Nazareth." God sent his Son not just from Galilee to Jerusalem, nor just

from the manger to the cross, but all the way from heaven to earth. The full implications of this text can hardly be grasped in human language. In sending Jesus, God did not send a substitute or a surrogate. He came himself. – E. Schweizer

He came Himself and became entirely man.

3. Entirely Man

Look at the last two phrases of verse 4. The phrase born of woman says “out of woman.” Jesus did not simply pass through Mary. This phrase means He was born of her, and it emphasizes His full, complete, and true humanity. Listen to Job 14:1 and Matthew 11:11. Gregory of Naziansen, one of the great early church fathers said it like this, “He remained what he was and took up what he was not.” He is still the eternal Son and became Mary’s son.

Not only was He Mary’s Son, but He was the promised one born of a woman from Genesis 3:14-15. God had given Adam and Eve a commission to rule the earth and make it a dwelling place for God and man. They failed in this commission but God promises a human being will come and fulfill this mission. The entire rest of the OT story following Genesis 3 is the waiting and anticipation of the seed born of a woman to undo the work of the serpent.

Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a woman, meaning that He’s the expected one, and that He’s entirely human. In taking on our humanity he took on every part of us. Mind, soul, and body. He became susceptible to death, decay, corruption, and sickness. He experienced the agony of emotional turmoil and loss and the joy of friendship and fun. The Son of God enfleshed Himself as one of us.

And yet, He did not sin. Sin is not original to human nature. Sin is normal but not natural. God did not design humans to have sin. Instead, it is the twisting and perversion of our humanity that causes us to sin.

And so, because we sin and are under the curse of sin that comes through the law, Paul says that the Son of God was born of a woman and born under the law. Notice the end of verse 4.

Jesus was born to a Jewish family, circumcised on the 8th day. He learned the Torah, went to the Temple, and obeyed the law. He was responsible for the law and perfectly kept it. He loved God and loved man without sin.

"A man must come to represent God on the earth; a man must live in covenant obedience to God; a man must bear the covenant curse on behalf of a disobedient humanity; and a man must rule with the character of God over the earth. The NT presents Jesus as this man: he is the true image of God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), the promised offspring of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), the obedient Son of God (Heb. 5:7-10), the great High Priest (Heb. 5:1-10; 7:1-28), the great Davidic king (Matt 1:1), and the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. Rom. 5:15). The typological trajectories that come through the OT terminate in one who can stand in the place of sinful humanity yet without sin, sympathize with the weakness and temptations of humanity, and provide a model life for a redeemed humanity. Jesus could fulfill these roles only as one who was fully human." – Wellum

And this is why a fundamental truth for our faith is that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. Doctrine matters and without the full humanity of Jesus you cannot be redeemed. But by God's grace we have a representative King who came in order to save us from sin. And that's what we're going to dive into next week. Who is Jesus? He's God and man and lastly, He's Savior. Listen to Galatians 4:5-7 to prepare you for next Sunday.

So, please invite family and friends to either service. There will be singing, specials, and a message on Jesus as Savior. I'd love to pack this place out for both services and worship Christ for coming down from heaven to save us. Let's close in prayer.

Sermon Reflections Questions – 12/15/24

- Explain what it means that humans are the glory and garbage of the universe.
- What are some ways that human beings express our amazing capacities to glorify God?
- Explain why humans need help from both outside our humanity and inside our humanity.
- What is Paul's purpose in the book of Galatians?
- What does it mean in Galatians 4:4 that "the fullness of time had come"?
- How should the knowledge that all giving originates in heaven change the way we think and act?
- Why is it correct to think of the incarnation of Jesus as a mission?
- What was it like in heaven for the Son of God before the incarnation?
- Did the Son of God cease being God when He became incarnate? Why or why not?
- Why does it matter that Jesus become fully human, meaning He had a human will, soul, mind, and body?

- Why does it matter that Jesus was born under the law?
- What's one truth from this passage that you can use this week to encourage a fellow believer?