

Sermon: 4th Sunday in Advent

Text: Romans 1:1-7 (v.2-4)

Theme: The Gospel God promised beforehand regarding His Son

Goal: The coming of Jesus, the promised Son of God, shows the faithfulness of God for the sake of our salvation.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The first Christmas was not an event that happened only by chance. God had been planning it to take place since long time before. And the first Christmas is not just an event by itself. It had a goal and reached its peak at the resurrection of Jesus.

At the beginning of his letter to the Romans, Paul sets the ground of his ministry and of his preaching. This is the ground of every faithful pastor and every faithful church as well.

I – The Gospel God promised through the prophets

Paul introduced himself to the Romans saying: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart **for the gospel of God**— the gospel He promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

The readings for today are all linked to the same issue: God is fulfilling His promises given beforehand in the Holy Scriptures.

Isaiah records a special sign given by God 700 years before Christ was born. He said: “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”

(Isaiah 7:14) – When the angel appeared to Joseph (as we heard in the Gospel, Matthew 1:22, 23), the Evangelist recalled the prophecy and wrote: “All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, “The virgin is going to

have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel.” The name Immanuel means “God with us.”

Many other prophecies were recorded in the Old Testament in regard of Jesus. And God showed His faithfulness to His people when He accomplished His promises, beginning the accomplishment on the first Christmas.

II – Regarding His Son: human nature.

Paul explained in two parts what the Gospel he preached is: “The Gospel...regarding His Son, who as to **His human nature** was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Psalm 24 acclaimed the King of Glory, the Lord Almighty. The psalm was written by David, the great King of Israel. And David was foreseeing his Descendant, a greater King than himself. – The Gospel highlighted that Joseph was from the family of King David; and just before the Gospel reading for today, the genealogy of Jesus is recorded, showing the line of Jesus till David and till Abraham.

The fact that Jesus was from the family of King David goes through many prophecies of the Old Testament, and goes through the story of the first Christmas like a red thread. As a descendant of David, the Messiah had to be born in the city of David, Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary had to face a long journey from Nazareth, in the North of the country, to Bethlehem, in the South, so that the prophesy should be accomplished.

During His ministry, Jesus was called as “the Son of David” by several faithful people, showing that Jesus was recognized as the accomplishment of the prophecies.

Paul mentioned that “as to His **human nature** (Jesus) was a descendant of David”. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14), God became a human being. It was necessary for our Saviour to be true man to act on our behalf in what we were unable to do according to God’s will. He completely fulfilled the Law on our behalf. His life was an ordinary life, He lived as every human being does, - but without sin. Jesus became tired, hungry, thirsty, and eventually died. All this is essential part of the Gospel preached by Paul and proclaimed by the Christian Church to our days: Jesus, true man!

III – Regarding His Son: Divine nature

But the baby in the manger was not only true man descending from the house of King David, but He was also true God, Son of the Almighty God! Paul talks about the two natures of Christ: “The Gospel...regarding His Son, who as to **His human nature** was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Jesus is someone unique in the history. He has two natures: The human and the divine nature. It was necessary to be true God to overcome death and the devil for us. This was an impossible task for a human being. Only God could have worked out our salvation. *This personal union began when Jesus became man and continues forever* (Small Catechism p.124). The God made man on Christmas didn’t stop to be a human being after His resurrection. The disciples first thought the resurrected Jesus was a ghost. But Jesus said to them: “Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

The power of Jesus, His miracles and signs, and eventually His resurrection show that He was not just an ordinary man, but He was

and is the God-Man. “...through the Spirit of holiness (Jesus) was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Conclusion: The message of Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection is the core of the Gospel. Everything in His person and everything in His life was on our behalf to recommend us to God. Therefore Paul was able to assure the Christians in Rome and all Christians around the world – **and us as well**, - that “you also are among those who are called and belong to Jesus Christ.” The believers receive forgiveness and life through faith in Jesus and are called to be children of God and members of His holy family, the Christian Church. This is the big comfort the Gospel brings to us all: It is for us! - And this message has to be shared with as many people as possible, as Paul wrote: “Through Him (Jesus) and for His name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.” Christ is for all and God continuously calls people to His Kingdom of grace and peace through the preaching and witnessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christmas time is a good season to share the Gospel, to share God’s love in Jesus, so that more people know Jesus, true man and true God. In spite of all the commercials, all the running up and down, and the festive atmospheres at home, most of the people know that the church is celebrating the Feast of the Love of God. Invite your family and friends to come for the Christmas Eve and for the Christmas Day services. Our prayer is that the same Gospel promised by the prophets in the Old Testament and accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, would touch the hearts of many, bringing them to the true faith and hope. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 22 December 2013