

22nd December 2024
Sunday before Christmas (Advent 4)

At Christmas we welcome Jesus who is like us in every way, apart from sin

Isaiah 49.1-6

Psalms 132.11-16

Heb.2.10-11,14-18

Luke 1.39-49

Key Verse - *"For the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name."* Luke 1:49

As we approach Christmas, we are reminded of the profound mystery and beauty of the incarnation: God becoming man in Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus is not just the arrival of a Savior but also the arrival of one who is fully human, sharing in our nature in every way except sin. This truth assures us that Jesus understands our struggles, feels our pain, and walks with us in every situation. Today's theme calls us to reflect on the humanity of Jesus and the implications of His sinless nature. As we journey through the Scriptures - Isaiah 49:1-6, Psalm 132:11-16, Hebrews 2:10-11, 14-18, and Luke 1:39-49 - we will see how Jesus, fully human and yet sinless, is uniquely qualified to be our Savior.

1. Jesus, the Servant Chosen for Us - Isaiah 49:1-6

Isaiah speaks of the Servant of the Lord, chosen and called by God to bring salvation to the world: *"The Lord called me before I was born; while I was in my mother's womb he named me"* (Isaiah 49:1). Jesus' humanity begins with His conception and birth, just like ours. He was not a distant deity but one who entered our world through the womb of a mother. Yet, His mission was divine: to restore Israel and be a light to the nations. Jesus' shared humanity means He understands the struggles of life, from birth to death. He experienced hunger, fatigue, joy, and sorrow, making Him a compassionate Savior. Consider a doctor who has experienced the same illness as their patients. Their empathy and understanding make their care more effective. In the same way, Jesus' shared humanity brings Him closer to us. As we prepare for Christmas, let us be comforted that Jesus knows us deeply. He was chosen for this mission of love and redemption, and His birth assures us of God's intimate care for humanity.

2. Jesus, the Fulfilment of God's Promise - Psalm 132:11-16

The psalmist celebrates God's promise to David that one of his descendants would reign forever: *"The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: 'One of your own descendants I will place on your throne.'"* (Psalm 132:11). Jesus, born in Bethlehem, fulfills this promise as the eternal King from David's line. His humanity ties Him to the history of Israel, grounding His mission in God's covenant faithfulness. Jesus' birth is a reminder that God keeps His promises. Through Him, the longing of generations for a Savior is fulfilled. Imagine waiting for years for a promised gift, only to find that the gift exceeds your expectations. The birth of Jesus was the fulfilment of God's promise, surpassing all hope. This Christmas, let us trust in the faithfulness of God. Just as He fulfilled His promise through Jesus, He will fulfil His promises in our lives.

3. Jesus, Fully Human and Without Sin - Hebrews 2:10-11, 14-18

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes Jesus' full humanity: *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14).

Jesus shared in our humanity to experience our struggles and sufferings. Yet, He was without sin, making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He became like us in every way to bring us into His family, calling us His brothers and sisters. Jesus' sinless nature sets Him apart as our Redeemer. He faced temptation but did not sin, making Him the spotless Lamb of God. His humanity assures us that He understands our weaknesses, and His divinity assures us that He can save us. A firefighter enters a burning building not only to understand the fire but to save those trapped inside. Jesus entered our world to rescue us from sin and death. Let us rejoice that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. His sinlessness gives us hope for redemption, and His humanity assures us of His compassion.

4. Jesus, the Cause of Our Rejoicing - Luke 1:39-49

In Luke's Gospel, Mary's visit to Elizabeth highlights the joy and wonder surrounding Jesus' birth. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"* (Luke 1:42). Mary's song, the Magnificat, declares the greatness of God, who has done mighty things for her and for all people through Jesus. The humanity of Jesus is central to this joy - He is God made flesh, coming to dwell among us. The incarnation is the source of our rejoicing. God did not remain distant but entered our world to bring salvation. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we are called to celebrate His presence among us. Think of a family welcoming a long-awaited child. The joy and celebration overflow, not because the child is perfect, but because their presence is a gift. In Jesus, we receive the ultimate gift - the presence of God with us. This Advent, let us join Mary in magnifying the Lord. Let our lives reflect the joy and gratitude of knowing that Jesus, fully human and fully divine, has come to save us.

Conclusion

At Christmas, we welcome Jesus, who is like us in every way except sin. His humanity assures us that He understands our struggles, and His divinity assures us that He can save us. Through Jesus, God fulfills His promises, shares in our humanity, and brings us joy and hope. As we prepare to celebrate His birth, let us reflect on His humility, rejoice in His faithfulness, and embrace the salvation He offers. Let us open our hearts to welcome Him, not just as the baby in the manger but as the Savior who walks with us every day.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the gift of Jesus, who shared in our humanity to bring us salvation. As we prepare to celebrate His birth, help us to welcome Him into our hearts and lives. May we find comfort in His understanding of our struggles and joy in His victory over sin and death. Teach us to trust in Your promises and to reflect the love and grace of Christ to others. This Christmas, may our lives magnify Your name, and may we be filled with the hope and peace that only Jesus can bring. In His precious name, we pray. Amen.