

Luke 1:26-38 CC 9am 1st Aug 2010

Who do you think you are – it's a television programme which helps people to look back into their family history and see something of the people in their family tree. I think the aim is for people to understand themselves better but I have only ever seen one so I'm not sure.

However during August we are both here at the 9am service and then in a different way at 10.30 going to be asking of Jesus, "who do you think you are" as we seek to understand him more and see how that helps us as we follow him.

We start with Mary and Joseph and this passage from Luke's gospel.

Do you like yourself? Do you deal kindly with yourself and treat yourself well? I ask that because sometimes I wonder about it with regards to myself. I mean firstly I put myself through having to preach Job when we could have done something easier like Ephesians or Revelation and now, realising that it is always hard at Christmas to say something new and different about the passages about the birth of Jesus, I'm preaching the birth in August. Clearly I don't like myself!

But what do Jesus' parents and his birth teach us about who he is?

1. Mary and Joseph – v26-27

What are we told about Mary and Joseph here?

We can see them as pretty ordinary human beings. They were living in Nazareth. They were pledged to be married and so presumably like any other couple were planning their wedding, saving for it and for their home together.

Mary we are told was a virgin and that of course was important in terms of the nature of the birth and of the person of Jesus.

Joseph we are told was a descendent of King David who had been the second King of Israel around about 1000BC. We will see more about him later in the series.

We are not told anything about Mary's family. In fact we are not told anything about her that would show she is noteworthy or worthy of God's favour.

What we see is just a very ordinary down to earth young couple in a small town in Israel.

2. God's action – v28-31a

However God acted and that was to change their lives and the whole of human history.

God sent an angel a messenger to Mary and the angel said a number of things about her. Firstly in v28 she is highly favoured and that is repeated in v30 you have found favour with God. Then secondly v28 "The Lord is with you".

The two go together. In the first the angel was telling Mary that God who knew her was about to grant her a special favour. God has chosen her for a special task. We know that the special task was to bear a child who would be the son of God but Mary at that point didn't know. Here is the call of God to Mary why to her? Well as we have seen not because she was in some way special but simply because God chose her.

But God not only chose her, he was with her and that had the sense of "the Lord will help you". God had chosen her, she was in that way favoured by God but sometimes we do wonder whether what God calls us to is a blessing. For Mary the path would not be easy as Simeon was later to prophesy to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." So with the call came the assurance of God's presence and help. As Paul was to put it, "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess 5:24).

God broke into the normal life of this ordinary young woman with a call to a huge task but also with the assurance of his own presence and help. That it seems to me is how God works isn't it. He takes us ordinary people and he calls us. He calls us to follow Jesus but in that call is the call to be ambassadors for Christ. That call we know is hard and we need the presence and power of God if we are to live and speak for Jesus in a way that draws others to Jesus.

God was calling Mary to a special task with the assurance of the presence and help of God and in v31 the angel told her what the task was. She was to become pregnant and give birth to a child. Small wonder that she needed the reassurance. However the account in Luke is not here to focus on Mary and our task this morning is not to focus on Mary the focus is on

3. The nature of the child to be born – v31b-33

Here we really get down to answering the question Jesus "who do you think you are?" For the account that Luke gives us here really does help. Follow the verses with me as we see.

a. the name Jesus.

We start at the end of v31 "you are to give him the name Jesus." We know from Matthew's gospel that the name had significance. In Matt 1:21 we read "you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." The "he" there is emphatic so it could be read he and no other will save. God was making it clear to Joseph and through him that his son was being born to be the saviour of the world. As one writer put it, "Jesus was not so much the man born to be King as the man born to be Saviour".

And God made it clear what kind of Saviour he was to be. Yes the people were crying out for a liberator, someone who would save them from the Romans but that was not the saviour he would be. He would come to save people from the wrath of God and so that those who deserve that wrath might through Jesus and his death on the cross instead find forgiveness and acceptance in the presence of our holy God. The one to be born would be born to save, to rescue his people.

b. Son of the Most High

Here we see the uniqueness of Jesus as the Son of God for that is what this epithet really is indicating. This child is to be the child of God, born as we can see later by the power of God the Holy Spirit. We are meant to see his divine sonship. When we ask who are you Jesus we are meant to see that he is the Son of God who came into the world to be its saviour.

c. Given David's throne

David is the great King of the Old Testament who established the Kingdom of Israel, setting its borders and putting Jerusalem as its capital. In later days as the kingdom divided and the kings were bad the desire for a king like David arose and the promise came from God through the prophets that one day a great King out of the line of David would come and rule with justice (Is 16:5; Jer 23:5-6). Here the angel says that this child will be that great King established on the throne of David where the throne is the symbol of power. Here we see the continuity in the saving purposes of God a line

which stretches from David, whom we will see later was a great but flawed King, through to Jesus who is the perfect King who rules with justice and wisdom.

d. His kingdom will never end

The last thing to stress is that there would be no end to his Kingdom. The angel was talking here not about earthly rule and kingdom but about the kingdom of God. It was the arrival of Jesus that brought in this kingdom. His death and resurrection established his kingdom that is his rule over everything, even sin and death. His ascension saw him established at the right hand of the Father where he reigns for ever. All this is wrapped up in the angels message that this child to be born would be king for ever.

4. Who are you Jesus?

So who do you think you are Jesus?

Jesus is the Son of man, born of Mary and able to trace his lineage through Joseph back to David. He is a man just like us who experienced all the things we go through. On Monday I took a funeral and mentioned in the talk how Jesus understands bereavement for he wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. He knows joy having been to plenty of parties. He knows pain as he suffered on the cross. Please don't say God doesn't know what it is like to be me. He does for Jesus was fully human.

However the angel tells us that he is God. He came born of God the Holy Spirit to bring salvation to the world and then to reign in righteousness and justice over the whole of creation for all eternity.

Nothing can threaten that reign and rule of Jesus – what an incentive to press on with Christ! This is our hope that one day we will be with him in eternity. So if you get the chance this week to tell someone the reason for your hope, tell them this: the man Jesus Christ is the son of God and he will reign with all those who trust Him forever and ever.