

## **The Holy Spirit and Christ Go Together**

We continue the question we are pursuing during the Advent Midweek services this year: what does God the Holy Spirit have to do with Christ's coming, with Advent? Last week we heard that the Holy Spirit speaks the promise of Christ's coming. With Advent, however, there must be fulfillment of that promise. Christ must actually arrive? We know that arrival as the church's celebration of the birth of Jesus. We could ask then: what does the Holy Spirit have to do with the birth of Jesus? Scripture and the Apostles' Creed answer: Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

We want to meditate on this in order to consider why it is important that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. It is important so that we always hold fast to this: Jesus and the Holy Spirit go together, inseparably.

We have known these words of the Creed for a long time, "Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit." We have said these words many, many times in church, and in our devotion at home. It is easy to pass over these words rather quickly without giving much thought to the very significant fact they express. This fact is that God the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity, according to the mission given to Him by the Father, that created the human nature of the person of Jesus Christ in Mary's womb. The Holy Spirit is the One who made the human nature in which God the Son, or as John says in his Gospel, God the Word, became flesh (Mat. 1:18; John 1:14). The significance of this fact may come into focus if we were to think of Christ's birth if the only testimony of Scripture we had was John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh." For that verse would then suggest that the Word was the person of the Trinity that made the human nature of Christ. But Matthew and Luke tells us that it was the Holy Spirit that did so. So the fact that

the human nature of Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit takes on greater significance.

Now we need to be careful and precise here. God the Holy Spirit's creating the human nature and God the Son actually becoming flesh in it happened at the same moment. No interval of time separated the Holy Spirit causing the conception of the human nature in Mary's womb and God the Word becoming in-fleshed in it. All of this happened at the very same and precise moment. It is not the case that the human nature conceived by the Holy Spirit existed by itself apart from God the Word for even a fraction of a second before the Word became incarnate in it. So we understand that the man Jesus and God the Word are one undivided person, Jesus Christ, and that they have been such since the precise moment of the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit.

All of this can get mind-boggling to us. Undoubtedly, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have it figured out. But the wonder before us today is that it was the Holy Spirit that created the human nature in which the Word became incarnate. Why is this fact, which may seem like so-much theological hair-splitting, so critically important for us today?

We could approach it from this angle. Since the Holy Spirit is active in our lives, what does the Holy Spirit lead us to believe? To what, or we should rather say, to whom, does the Holy Spirit direct our faith for our salvation? Who does the Holy Spirit proclaim? What is the Holy Spirit's message and testimony?

The answer: Jesus Christ, and that this Jesus is the Son of God, Immanuel, the presence of God Himself with us. The Spirit proclaims Jesus as the one who saves us from our sins in His own death and resurrection. And the Holy Spirit leads you to believe in this Jesus that He proclaims. Why? Because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus could be Immanuel (Mat. 1:23) and the One who saves His people from their sins (Mat. 1:21). It would

be a strange state of affairs if the Holy Spirit caused the conception of Jesus so that Jesus could be Immanuel and the One who save us from our sins but then did not direct our faith to Jesus in the Spirit's work among us.

We could also approach it from this angle. If the word "spirit" makes us think of things spiritual or spirituality, and if the Holy Spirit has anything to do with spirituality, what does true spirituality consist of? It consists of faith and hope in Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit works within you through Word and Sacrament. It consists of bringing our heart-broken hearts over our sin and the tragedy that happens in this world because of it to Jesus for the promises of forgiveness, strength, and new creation. It consists of having fellowship with God the Father, which is yours through faith in Jesus Christ and by which you cry out to the Father for help. This is spiritual life, true spirituality.

Jesus and the Spirit go together, inseparably, because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. You know the Spirit's activity in your life because He proclaims the promises of Jesus and brings Him to you in your time and place through Word and Sacrament. You know the Spirit's activity because He causes you to trust those promises and hope for the day of Christ's arrival once again, when Christ will come in resurrection glory and triumph over sin death and the devil. This is what the Holy Spirit does in the church and in your life, and by all this He gives you eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Amen.

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