Text: Luke 1:26-38

**Introduction**

This is a strange day. The service that everyone expects on Christmas Eve is tonight. But right now it really isn’t the eve – short for evening. It is Advent 4. Church festivals are a bit like the Jewish day – there was evening and their was morning as Genesis records it. The new day starts at sundown.

Which gives us just enough time to sneak in a meditation on how we get to Christmas.

**Text**

Part of the story begins with King David. If you read his story – mostly in 1st and 2nd Samuel, although you can get the duplicate in Chronicles – you also realize that David really wanted to build a temple. He moved the ark to Jerusalem. He secured the site. He laid aside the materials. David was into this building project. He calls the prophet in to bless this and maybe Nathan gets ahead of himself, he talks out of term, how could God object to this?

But he does. The Word came to Nathan, “go back and tell the King oops, I made a mistake.” But the more important parts are the promises. At least in my reading there are a couple. The larger promise is what our text wants you to focus on “the LORD will make you a house…you kingdom shall be made sure forever.” The part our old testament reading leaves out – and again all the interesting parts in in the ellipses – but the part it leaves out says a couple of things. The first being that an immediate Son of David “who shall come from your body” shall build a house for my name. That would be Solomon. But we know that as great as Solomon was that throne didn’t even pass securely to his son. But God continues saying that “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son.” And that this Son will have the stripes of men, but that the steadfast love of God will not depart from him. And in this one the Kingdom is sure forever.

Sure Solomon builds the temple, but the House of God comes later.

And that is where Luke picks things up. It is entirely possible – maybe even probable – that Mary herself is a descendant of David, but the emphasis in Luke is that Joseph, her betrothed is of the house of David. Of course that house can hardly be said to exist if its heir is a carpenter in Nazareth. But the promise was that God would build a house for David, a house with an eternal throne. An heir that God would be the Father. And that is exactly was Gabriel is there to announce. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the LORD god will give to him the throne of his father David.”

**Christology**

The materials for the true temple of God were not the cedar or the stone. Nothing that David had set aside or that Solomon would procure. The temple of God would be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. The materials being our flesh and blood. Not our sinful flesh and blood, because Jesus is a new creation.

I’m stealing this line from Luther who notices that God delights in making things in new ways, including humans. Adam is made from the soil and has life breathed into him. Eve is made a new way as she is fashioned out of Adam. And the rest of us are made in yet a third way. As Paul would say in Acts 17:26, “he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.” Yet here is a 4th way that God has created a true man. The virgin would conceive and bear a son. “The Holy Spirit would come upon you and the power of the Most High will over shadow you.” And what God creates in his new ways is always holy – is always good.

And it is this Jesus who is the Son of Adam by the body of Mary, the Son of David though marriage to Joseph, the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the House build by God himself. This Jesus is the fulfillment of every thread and promise.

The only question is shall we believe it? Do we believe the Word of the Angel?

That is maybe the greater creation here. God has already demonstrated he could create humans in three ways, what is one more? But faith? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, but the story of Israel is not one of the triumph of faith. And even in the most recent announcement by Gabriel – that of the nativity of John the Baptist to Zechariah – Zechariah even seeing the angel before the altar doesn’t really believe it.

**Moral**

And in our cynical age we might be tempted to take Mary’s first response as disbelief. “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” But unlike Gabriel’s swift response to Zechariah’s unbelief, sealing his tongue for 9 months, Gabriel takes Mary’s question in a different way. I’d put it forward as faith seeking understanding. The ancients weren’t dummies. Neither was Mary. She knew how babies were made. She also believed that that was simply the way God worked. If God was doing a new thing, how would this work?

And Gabriel, as God often does when you have honest questions of faith, He condescends to answer us in the best way possible. And there are two parts to the Angel’s answer. The first is the doctrinal part. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you.” This is they type of thing captured in the creeds. “Conceived by the Holy Spirit.” Or in greater detail in the Nicene Creed, “God of God, Light of God…begotten, not made…was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary.” The doctrine is given both as something to believe and as the sign. The prophet foretold that the virgin would conceive and bear a son, and here He is. The doctrine is just bedrock reality, the way God has made things. We can reject it, live apart from it, but our actions have no effect on the doctrine’s truth. Mary was seeking understanding and was given the doctrine.

The second thing that Mary was given though was someone to carry the load with. “Behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son.” Now Elizabeth had done this in the normal way, in a way that God has done before with Sarah and Hannah and others. But it was still something miraculous and a little unbelievable as Zechariah sat mute. “For nothing is impossible with God.”

The best way for faith seeking understanding continues to be in the same pattern. We are given the doctrines – which may or may not help. We may or may not be able to comprehend them. But we are also placed within the church. We are pointed by God toward those who bear the same burdens.

And the response of Mary is also the response of the church. “I am the servant of the LORD.” That is the response of faith. And when we see the truth of what is given come to pass, that faith is strengthened. When we struggle together, that faith is strengthened. When that faith is strengthened, maybe our insight – our understanding – deepens.

**Eschatological**

If there have been four ways that God has created humans, there is also a fifth way. The Holy Jesus, born from Mary was crucified, died and was buried. And in the normal way of things, this is the end. But on the third day he rose again from the dead. The resurrection is the recreation, is the new creation. Now Jesus himself was already a new creation, but all this creation was subject to decay. Death hung over all of it. I’m not saying this as doctrine, I don’t think I can, but Jesus grew just as all of us. As the carol has it, “for he is our childhood’s pattern, Day by Day like us he grew.” But we had no way past death being sinful. But Jesus being Holy did.

And submitting death, which could not hold him, he created a fifth new way to make humans. The resurrection of the dead. And all of us found in Christ, shall live under His eternal throne – the throne of his father David. And we shall live in his eternal house – the house of the LORD almighty. As we have been made a new creation, by the power of the blood and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Have faith – Like Mary. God is doing a new thing. Let is be to us according to His word. Amen.