**Advent Vespers I,**

 **The First Sunday in Advent,**

1 December 2019.

 *Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“God was Born of the Virgin St. Mary to Give men a Pure Birth unto Life Everlasting.”**

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

**Isaiah 7:14**.

**Introduction**.

 Here the prophet Isaiah confirms what the Lord said in the Garden of Eden. The Savior of mankind would born of a man but would be born of a woman[[1]](#footnote-1)1 without the assistance of a man.

 Why is this? In the first places it teaches us that men and women are equal; for salvation comes not only through a man but also through a woman.[[2]](#footnote-2)2 Finally, it teaches us that the Savior escaped the taint of sin imposed by original sin through normal human conception. Christ enjoyed a birth untainted by sin not for Himself -- He’s God and has no need of such human experiences -- but rather for us who were in desperate need of a pure conception and birth. Consequently, Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin St. Mary by God the Holy Spirit in order to undergo a pure human conception and birth to give to men through the Gospel by faith a pure conception and birth unto life everlasting.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

 This obedience of Christ includes He’s suffering and death on the Cross for our sins. Now our slates have been wiped clean by Christ’s suffering on the Cross and our slates filled up with good works pleasing to God forever.

 Christ was born of the Virgin St. Mary in order to give men a pure birth unto life everlasting.

**I. Christ Enjoys a Pure Conception and Birth in order to Give all Men a Pure Conception and Birth unto Life Everlasting.**

**A. Men are conceived in sin unto everlasting death**.

 Christ was conceived and born of the Virgin St. Mary not for Himself -- Christ after all is the Holy God Himself and has no such need of this human experience -- but rather for us who are lethally conceived in sin because of the fall of Adam into sin. David writes of the sinful conception of men:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.[[4]](#footnote-4)4

 Sin at the outset. That is not good. At the moment of our coming into being death is tugging at our sleeve because of sin. The Apostle St. Paul writes that the wages of sins is death:

For the wages of sins *is* death ... .[[5]](#footnote-5)5

 This terrible situation came about because of the fall of Adam into sin in the Garden of Eden. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all of have sinned.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

**B. Christ enjoys a pure conception and birth in order to give all men a pure conception and birth unto life everlasting.**

What to do? There is nothing we nor any other man can do. *We come into being in a mortal state because of the sin inherited from Adam*. For this reason, *out of His Great Mercy toward fallen men, God deigned to undergo a Pure Human Conception and Birth for us.*  The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

But while he [Joseph, Jesus’ stepfather] thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

Luther writes of Christ’s Pure Conception and Birth for us:

This is the great joy, of which the angel speaks, this is the consolation and the superabundant goodness of God, that man (if he has this faith) may boast of such treasure as that Mary is his real mother, Christ his brother, and God his father. For these things are, all of them, true and they come to pass, provided we believe them; this is the chief part and chief good in all the gospels, before one derives from them teaching concerning good works. Christ, above all things, must become ours and we his, before we undertake good works. That happens in no other way than through such faith; it teaches the right understanding of the gospels and it seizes hold on them in the right place. That makes for the right knowledge of Christ; from it the conscience becomes happy, free, and contented; from it grow love and praise of God, because it is he who has given us freely such superabundant goods in Christ. Then there follows a mind right willing to do, to refrain from doing, and to suffer everything that is pleasing to God, be it a matter of living or dying, as I have said many times. This is the meaning of Isaiah 9[:6]: “To us a child is born, and to us a son is given.” To us, to us, born to us and given to us. Therefore see to it that you derive from the Gospel not only enjoyment of the story as such, for that does not last long. Nor should you derive from it only an example, for that does not hold up without faith. But see to it that you make his birth your own, and that you make an exchange with him, so that you rid yourself of your birth and receive, instead, his. This happens, if you have this faith. By this token you sit assuredly in the Virgin Mary’s lap and are her dear child. This faith you have to practice and to pray for as long as you live; you can never strengthen it enough. That is our foundation and our inheritance; on it the good works are to be built.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

 Christ was not conceived through normal human means but rather by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin St. Mary. Were Christ conceived by the normal human means He would then be conceived in sin like all other men and subject to death because of His sin. Christ would be no Savior -- indeed, He would be in need of a Savior. Rather, however, Christ was conceived of the Virgin St. Mary by the Holy Ghost so their was no “conceiving in sin” as David says for Christ.

 The prophet Jeremiah brings out this Pure Conception and Birth of the Virgin St. Mary when he writes of Christ’s Birth:

How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

 In the first place, the Lord says this is a “new thing” He has created. What is this new thing? The new thing is that a “woman shall compass a man.” Whereas formerly man compassed a woman because woman was drawn from Adam and fashioned from his rib, here a Man, i.e., the Messiah, is drawn from a woman; hence, a woman compasses a man, Scripture again teaching us the equality of men and women.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

 Secondly, it means and fulfills what Scripture says: *The Messiah would be born of a woman and, more specifically, born of a virgin because the woman compasses a man, namely, the normal order of human procreation is not involved*. The Messiah is born of a virgin, namely, the Virgin St. Mary. So the prophet Isaiah foretold:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin1[[11]](#footnote-11)1 shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

The Apostle St. Matthew writes of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy some 700 years later in the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth:

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

 Finally, because the Messiah is born of the Virgin St. Mary, He is bereft of any taint of sin (original sin) introduced by the normal course of human procreation since the fall of Adam. Christ enjoys a fully pure conception and birth in order to give it to us to replace our lethal conception and birth and father us1[[15]](#footnote-15)5 into life everlasting. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Jerome Kromayer (professor of theology at Leipzig, d. 1670) ... says: “Christ passed through all stages of our life in order that He might thoroughly heal our sinful conception and birth.”1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

 The last stage of life, death, Christ also passed through for us in His Passion wherein He Atoned for the sins of men. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ... .1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

 Christ was not only faithful for us in life but also in death. Christ suffered a truly human death because His body and soul separated, which is the definition of human death1[[18]](#footnote-18)8. The Apostle St. John writes:

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

 Note that *Christ suffered God’s forsaking and wrath before He died. In other words, Christ suffered hell before He expired. Consequently, death is no longer death because Christ eliminated the sting of death before He died, converting death to mere sleep.*2[[20]](#footnote-20)0 The sting of death is the settling in of the everlasting abiding wrath of God when one expires. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.2[[21]](#footnote-21)1

The sting of death is the settling in of the abiding wrath of God forever when one breathes his last. But where this wrath is lifted, death loses its sting and is no longer death but sleep because we awaken and arise in the resurrection of the body. The Lutheran Church confesses:

And death itself serves this purpose, namely, to abolish this flesh of sin, that we may rise absolutely new. Neither is there now in the death of the believer, since by faith he has overcome the terrors of death, that sting and sense of wrath of which Paul speaks 1 Cor. 15, 56: *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law*. This strength of sin, this sense of wrath, is truly punishment as long as it is present; without this sense of wrath, death is not properly punishment.2[[22]](#footnote-22)2

 Christ Suffered a truly human death in order to Atone for our sins, wipe our slates clean, and convert death to mere sleep. Finally, Christ enjoyed a pure conception, birth, and life, waking and sleeping, in order to fill up our slates with the righteousness pleasing to God in order to give us birth unto life everlasting.2[[23]](#footnote-23)3

**II. Men are Conceived and Born unto Life Everlasting by the Gospel through Faith.**

**A. Christ’s Birth for us becomes ours by the Gospel through faith.**

As Luther noted above, Christ’s Pure Conception and Holy Birth becomes ours by faith. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.2[[24]](#footnote-24)4

 Through the new birth of Holy Baptism we become new creatures. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.2[[25]](#footnote-25)5

**B. By the Gospel through faith men gain life everlasting.**

 By the Gospel through faith men acquire life everlasting because the Gospel delivers to men Christ’s Pure Conception and Birth for them in order to save them:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.2[[26]](#footnote-26)6

**Conclusion**.

 The Son of God enjoyed a human birth and conception and birth not for Himself -- He’s God after all and has no need of such human experiences. Rather Christ enjoyed a holy and pure conception and birth in order to give that to men in order to give them a birth unto life everlasting.

 This Blessed Conception and Birth of Christ blesses us with through the Gospel by faith. By the Gospel through faith, Christ gives us His Pure Conception and Birth unto life everlasting and the resurrection of the body on the Last Day when Christ returns again in glory.

 **Amen.**

1. 1Because the Seed of the Woman was the Savior, the devil dreaded and hated childbirth. “This obscurity increased Satan’s care and worry. Since it is stated: ‘I shall put enmity between you and the woman,’ he was hostile and suspicious toward all those who gave birth from that time on until Christ was revealed. In man, on the other hand, this obscurity increased and intensified faith. Although individual women realized that they were not the ones who would give birth to this Seed, they were hopeful and certain that It would be born by another. And so it is particularly to mock and irritate Satan, to comfort the godly, and stir them up to faith that God speaks so individually, if I may express myself in this way. Women gave birth up to the Flood and later until the time of Mary; but their seed could not in truth be called the Seed of the woman, but rather the seed of a man. But what is born from Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is the true Seed of Mary, just as the other promises given to Abraham and David testify, according to which Christ is called the Son of Abraham and the Son of David.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 193, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“The angel says not among [unmarried] maidens but ‘among women’ because of that first promise of Gen. 3:15 that the woman’s seed would bruise the serpent’s head, and Jer. 31:{22}: ‘The woman will encompass a man.’ For that very reason Paul says, Gal. 4:4: ‘He was born of a woman.’ From this comparison of passages of Scripture, the explanation of the angel’s greeting will become clear.” *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists*, Vol. One, Book One, tr. Richard J. Dinda, Malone, TX: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2009, p. 113, correction in braces added; the original had verse 22, underscore added.

 **Jeremiah 33:22** reads: “... for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man”, underscore added. In other words, whereas in the beginning man compassed woman because she was drawn from man, in the “new thing”, namely, the Birth of the Messiah, a woman compasses a Man, namely, the Messiah, because the Messiah was born outside the normal process of procreation and was born of a virgin, namely, of a woman without the assistance of the man. “Women gave birth up to the Flood and later until the time of Mary; but their seed could not in truth be called the Seed of the woman, but rather the seed of a man. But what is born from Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is the true Seed of Mary, just as the other promises given to Abraham and David testify, according to which Christ is called the Son of Abraham and the Son of David.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol 1, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3“Jerome Kromayer (professor of theology at Leipzig, d. 1670) ... says: ‘Christ passed through all stages of our life in order that He might thoroughly heal our sinful conception and birth.’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4**Psalm 51:5**. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**Romans 5:12**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7**St. Matthew 1:20**, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8*Luther’s Works,* Vol. 52, p. 15, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**Jeremiah 31:22**, underscore added. “Only a new man can sing *a new song*. But the new man is a man of grace, a spiritual and inner man before God. The old man, however, is the man of sin, the carnal and outer man before the world. The newness is grace, the oldness, sin. Therefore the devil is called the ‘old serpent’ (Rev. 12:9), and Christ ‘a new thing which the Lord created on the earth’ (Jer. 31:22), through whom God the Father made all things new, according to Rev. 21:5. It is clear, then, that this ‘new song’ is so called not because of time, but because of the new holy thing, for Scripture is holy, and it speaks of the holy. Thus also the harp is holy and the psaltery is holy.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 10, 154, underscore added.

 “The angel says not among [unmarried] maidens but ‘among women’ because of that first promise of Gen. 3:15 that the woman’s seed would bruise the serpent’s head, and Jer. 31:{22}: ‘The woman will encompass a man.’ For that very reason Paul says, Gal. 4:4: ‘He was born of a woman.’ From this comparison of passages of Scripture, the explanation of the angel’s greeting will become clear.” *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists*, Vol. One, Book One, tr. Richard J. Dinda, Malone, TX: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2009, p. 113, correction in braces added; the original had verse 22, underscore added.

 Luther continues on the Gospel order of old and new: "Corollary. Old songs are all shameful, scurrilous, carnal and worldly songs, even if they should first be sung or composed today. New songs, however, are all psalms, honorable, holy, godly, and spiritual songs, even if they dated back tot he time of the first man; indeed, these are the newest songs. Thus says the Lord (Matt. 20:16): 'The last will be first, and that first last.' Thus the songs of our time are surely extremely old, even though in point of time they are the latest. Second, the newer or more recent a person is in the soul, the newer and more recent he can make one and the same song. And the same applies to the old." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 10, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10Scripture has taught the equality of man and woman from the beginning. “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” **Genesis 1:27**. Man and woman are equal because both are created in the Image of God. Man and woman are *not*, however, identical because they are created male and female. In order to achieve their goals destroying marriage and the civilized order that arises from marriage, feminists blur equality with identity. Blurring distinctions is the *modus operandi* of demagogues and tyrants. “The blurring of vital distinctions is a mark of ideology or immaturity.” Christina Hoff Summers, Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 98.

 Christ’s Virgin Birth also endorses motherhood, which feminism despises. “To be born of a virgin He doth not despise.” Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, #102, stanza 2, verse 2. Feminism does the devil’s bidding. Because the devil failed to stop Christ’s Birth (**St. Matthew 2:13**, **Revelation 12:4**), the devil teaches men and women to despise child birth in order to teach them to despise the Savior born of a woman. By teaching them to despise despise the Savior because He’s born of a woman, feminists teach men and women to despise their salvation and, thereby, lose it, which is the ardent desire of the devil. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11Actually, Isaiah makes it definite and writes “the virgin” (*halmah*) as does the Apostle St. Matthew when he writes in **St. Matthew 1:23**, “*hay parthenos*”, which is translated, “the virgin”. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12**Isaiah 7:14.** [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13Please see footnote eleven. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14**St. Matthew 1:22-23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15For this reason, because Christ fathers us into life everlasting by His Passion, the prophet Isaiah calls Christ “the Everlasting Father” (**Isaiah 9:6**), not because of His Person, He’s the Son and not the Father, but His Work and Office to Father men into life everlasting by His Passion. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**I Corinthians 15:3-4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who hath gave it.” **Ecclesiastes 12:7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**St. John 19:30**. The separation of body and soul is the definition of human death (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**).

 The prophet Daniel prophesied Christ would put an end (“finish”) to sin. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” **Daniel 9:24**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20“Christ is saying to us ... I can very readily raise you from the dead – as easily as you rouse someone from sleep – and desire very much to do so, having both the necessary power and intention. ... It follows from this, therefore, that those who lie dead and buried in the churchyard and under the ground sleep more lightly than we do in our beds. We know it can easily happen that a person sleeps so soundly that he is called ten times before he ever hears. But the dead hear that lone word of Christ and wake up. The moment he speaks that one word, ‘Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!’; ‘Lazarus, come forth!’; ‘Talitha cumi, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise!’ they hear in that very instant. And on Judgment Day, when he speaks that one word, the dead will hear in that very same moment and come forth from the graves. It is true, we sleep much more soundly in bed than we do in the churchyard! Thus before our Lord God, death is not death but a sleep. For us, when we die it is and is termed death, but before God it is but a sleep and a very light sleep at that.” *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. VII, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 21**I Corinthians 15:56-57.** [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 22*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article VI: Of Confession and Satisfaction**.56. 57, *Triglotta*, p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 23Because Christ fathers us into life everlasting by His Passion, the prophet Isaiah calls Him the “Everlasting Father”, **Isaiah 9:6**. Christ is the Everlasting Father not according to His Person, He’s the Son and not the Father, but according to His Office of Redeemer wherein He Redeems men by Fathering them into life everlasting by His Passion. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 24**Galatians 3:26-27**. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. 25**II Corinthians 5:17**. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 26**Titus 3:4-7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)