

NEW DAY...NEW WAY

God's Greatest Journey

Text: Mt. 1-2, Mk. 1, Lk. 1-2, Jn 1

INTRODUCTION: This week we started reading through the New Testament together. Is it not neat to do it chronologically, reading parts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, so that you get to hear from each of the gospel writers about the wonderful things in the life of our Lord?

Let me take a moment to explain both the similarities and the differences that you will find as you read through the gospels.

First, you will find Matthew, Mark, and Luke to be the most alike, although even among these three there will be some differences. These three gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels which means "similar view."

Today, I want to transition us from all that we have read and studied in the Old Testament to what God begins to declare in the New Testament about the New Day God was sending and the New Way God was revealing. And I am going to do that by the telling of the story. Each of the gospels tells a part of the story, having often been called through history the greatest story ever told. I call it "God's Greatest Journey."

John begins his gospel saying,

John 1:1.14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

But the story of God's greatest journey begins before the beginning, before the origin of time or space or matter or anything: a time when there was nothing except God. No earth, no heavens, no angels; just God, God in three persons the Bible reveals: God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons of the one and only God.

In divine council the decision was made to create the universe, to fill it with life and beauty, and to make a man and woman in the image of God Himself.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

And

- since God was a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
- so man would be a trinity of body, soul, and spirit.

The heart of God throbbed with joy to contemplate creating someone upon whom He could bestow His great love. But His omniscient wisdom and divine foreknowledge also caused a tinge of pain within. For God knew that when man and woman were made in His likeness, having the freedom to obey their Lord and Master or to rebel against Him, that they would choose the path of sin and rebellion.

This meant that even before mankind was created that God also had to choose. Would He make a creature who would rebel against Him and fall away into sin, unable to enter into fellowship with the Father and therefore be eternally separated from God? Could there be any way that man could be restored to a right relationship with an altogether holy God, once sin had entered his life?

And in the heavenly council of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there was decided that there was one way that a sinful man or woman could be restored to a right and eternal relationship with an altogether holy God. Such a plan would involve all three persons of the Trinity.

- God the Father would send God the Son as the Christ to pay the penalty for the sins mankind would commit.
- God the Holy Spirit would convict the hearts of men of their sin and of their need for a Savior and draw them to trust the Christ as their own Lord and master.
- God the Son would become a man so that He could die upon a cross as the substitute for man.

God, who conceived the plan, also set His approval upon it; and thus was finalized the decision that the Son of God should come to earth as the Christ and die upon a cross to pay the price of the sin of the world. And therefore God the Son became known throughout all of heaven as

Rev. 13:8 ... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

So God created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in it. And God created the first man and the first woman. He called them Adam and Eve. They were created perfectly with no stain of sin within their lives. They were created in the image of God Himself. One consequence of their being so created was that, as God was able to choose, God had given them the ability to choose. We do not know exactly how long the primordial couple lived without sin, maybe days, maybe weeks, maybe longer. But one day the tempter came and they succumbed to his lies. They disobeyed the commandment of God not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Sin entered them and overcame them.

Immediately, everything changed. The personal relationship they had with God Himself was now blockaded by the sin they allowed in their lives. The sweet fellowship with their maker they had enjoyed since the days of their creation was suddenly brought to an end. The wonderful home in the Garden of Eden that had been a luxurious haven was now taken from them. The ground that had previously yielded all manner of fruits and vegetables to them as if it longed to give to them the rich produce of the land, now required great labor to force it to give up its goods to man.

It had happened just as God knew it would. It would still be thousands of years before the journey would begin; the journey of the Son of God to this earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty

for sin. But God began to tell men what He planned to do. In fact, God's first announcement came as God cursed Satan for leading the man and woman into sin. God said to the evil one,

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Many years later, God told Abraham that the coming Christ would come through his line and be a blessing to all the people of the earth.

Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Hundreds of years later, God made a similar promise to David, saying,

2 Samuel 7:12-13 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Through David God also foretold the agony of the cross the Christ would endure when He made His journey from heaven to earth.

Psalms 22:16-18 ...The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

And through Isaiah God made clear the reason for the journey and for the cross:

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

God also told Isaiah the unique and miraculous way that His Son would enter the world:

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Some seven hundred plus years later, in what the Bible calls the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son. God's greatest journey had begun.

The Father had prepared a couple to be the earthly parents of the Christ, for the Son of God would enter the world as a baby. There were in the town of Nazareth of Galilee, a young woman named Mary and a young man named Joseph. They may have not even known they were related, so distant was their common ancestor, but they were both descendants of the great King David. The Spirit of God stirred their hearts for one another, and God caused them to make plans to marry.

While they were still just engaged, having kept themselves pure in body and soul for each other and for God, the great journey of the Almighty began. The Lord Christ arose from His glorious

throne in the third heaven and walked from the heavenly throne room to the outer edges of the New Jerusalem. His feet treading upon streets of gold, His head passed beneath one of the gates of pearl inset in the wall of the heavenly house of God. There the eternal Son of God began His lonely descent through the galaxies of the universe to one called the Milky Way. He had created it by the word of His mouth only a few thousand years before. Now the stars which He set in the sky on the fourth day of creation witnessed the greatest journey of their maker.

In the midst of the Milky Way, Christ entered the solar system, and came to a planet called earth, to a conquered territory in the Roman Empire called Galilee, to a little town named Nazareth. And there in the midst of that obscure village, the Eternal God Who cannot be contained put Himself into the womb of a virgin. The Immortal God became a mortal man, confining Himself to be a tiny infant growing within and dependent upon the body of His mother.

Over the next several months, the God Who constantly listened to the praises of the angels since the day they were created, listened to the scoffing of men and women as they mocked His mother and called her a liar. He who had traversed the universe in milliseconds now moved only with Mary, going where she went, resting where she rested.

After nearly nine months in the womb of His mother in Nazareth, the Christ was carried inside of her as she and Joseph made the arduous trip to Bethlehem to be enrolled for the census. It was planned this way long ago. Because the earthly mother of Christ was the physical heir to David's throne and His adoptive father Joseph, the legal heir to David, God the Father had sent word through the prophet Micah that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, the ancestral home of David the King.

And so while they were there in the city of David, although the only place available to them for lodging was a stable, the appointed time came for Christ to enter the world He had made as a tiny, helpless baby. Here He was, the Creator of the universe, born in the body of the creature. The One Who spoke the world into existence can now make only the coos and cries of an infant. The One Who could hold the galaxy in His hand can now only grasp the finger of His mother. For God to be so sorely limited seems so wrong, so out of kilter. But things were exactly right. God had done exactly what He planned and pronounced that He would do. God had made His greatest journey. He had come to the earth and now He was headed to the cross.

It seems so impossible that such a precious little one could be destined for that cruel death, but God the Father saw to it that the purpose of the Christ was clear all along the way. He had His mother wrap Him in swaddling cloths, strips of linen customarily used to wrap the body of the dead for burial. And when God brought the Magi from the east to worship the Christ Child, one of the gifts they brought was myrrh, which was used to anoint a body after death.

And Satan, whom God had told would be defeated by this Christ Who had now come to His world, would not surrender without a fight. He stirred up the anger and jealousy of King Herod to try to destroy this One who was born King of the Jews. But God the Father would have none of that. He sent Jesus with His parents to Egypt. The Christ was born to die, but it would be at the place and time appointed by God, and only for God's anointed purpose, to take away the sin of the world. He was the Lamb of God Who would lay down His life. No one would take it from Him.

In a few years, God let Herod die, and He sent Mary, Joseph, and Jesus back to Nazareth for the Christ to grow into a man. When Jesus was twelve, He went with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem for the Passover. When the company with which they traveled headed back for Nazareth, they thought Jesus was with friends. When they stopped to camp for the night, they discovered He was not. Frantically they traveled back to Jerusalem where they found Him with the rabbis in the temple. The rabbis had been astounded at the understanding the young man demonstrated in the Scriptures. When Mary and Joseph questioned Him Jesus replied, "Did you not know that I had to be about my Father's business?"

Jesus was and is the eternal Son of God. He journeyed to earth to do the will of the Father decreed before even light was spoken into existence. He came to earth to pay the penalty for sin and to die in the place of each of us who have sinned against a holy, holy, holy God.

This He did for me and for you. Will you respond to what He has done by trusting Him as Lord and Savior, receiving the gift of eternal life he purchased for you?

If you have trusted Him, will you be a part of the church for which He died, and worship and serve Him as the risen, living Lord?

And if you are a saved member of this church, will you purpose to live your life for Him with the kind of dedication with which He gave His life for you?

Jesus, the Christ, made God's greatest journey for each of us. Now what will we do for Him?