

## *In Nomine Jesu*

**Prayer Upon Entering Church:** O Lord God Almighty, because You have always supplied Your servants with the several gifts which come from Your Holy Spirit alone, leave also us not destitute of Your manifold gifts nor of grace to use them always to Your honor and the good of others; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### *The Text*

#### **Luke 4:14-21**

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

<sup>16</sup>And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

<sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

### *The Sermon*

**Conceived By The Holy Spirit; Born Of The Virgin Mary**

You know the words. Jesus was “*conceived by the Holy Spirit – and born of the Virgin Mary.*” Those words have formed our confession of the Faith for two millennia – and they are used here by the People of God every Sunday. This time of year – the wonder of those words seem to speak louder than ever. They speak to us of beginnings – the beginning of a new Church Year back in Advent – the beginning of Jesus’ earthly life – the beginning of His miracles – the beginning of His Public Ministry – and most importantly – the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation and eternal life. They speak to us then of Christmas and Epiphany – as Christ shows His glory and power to save sinful people like me and “you.

“*Conceived by the Holy Spirit – and born of the Virgin Mary.*” These are words about the beginning of life. They speak of the beginning of Jesus’ life – a very unique beginning – to be sure. Do you believe that on the basis of those words that Jesus Christ is true God? I have no doubt that you would answer: “Well, of course we do!” But I submit to you – on the basis of those words in our confession of Faith – that Jesus Christ is also true Man – born with a body and a soul – live every other human being in history. He was true God – and true Man – from the moment of conception. Now think about that this day! This means that our Savior-God was once a **zygote** – in Mary fallopian tubes. This means that our Savior-God was at one time – what people of science and medicine like to call a **blastocyst**.

Our Savior-God was once an **embryo** – attaching Himself to Mary’s uterine wall. Our Savior-God was once a fetus – growing and developing in Mary’s womb. Our Savior-God was once born into this world – **just like we were**. And there is a reason for all of this. It’s because **our** beginning **was not** so holy – and undefiled. “*Behold – I was brought forth in iniquity – and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” (Ps 51:5) – said King David. And he was right.

The reason there is a Christmas – is because Jesus’ beginning – had to be a substitute for our beginning. Jesus’ holy beginning – sanctifies our **unholy** beginning. The reason there is an Epiphany – a Christmas for the Gentiles – is because God loved us – when we were **zygotes** – and **embryos** – and **fetuses**. The words “*conceived by the Holy Spirit – and born of the Virgin Mary*” – not only testify – to Jesus’ divinity at His beginning. They also testify about His humanity! They testify to **our** humanity at **our** beginning. The reason there is an Epiphany – is because God loves life – from the moment of conception!

Christmas put us on a path to a new beginning. At that time of year – we gaze into the manger – and rejoice at the Birth of our Savior God – all gift wrapped in human flesh by His Heavenly Father. But we also know what is ahead. This is the beginning of all that Jesus would do – to be our Savior!

Even there in the delight of the manger scene – lurked the shadow of the Cross! Jesus would grow – and He would love – and heal – and preach – and teach – His way – to the Cross on a hill shaped like a skull called Golgotha. There – God’s love that came down at Christmas – all beautifully gift wrapped in human flesh – would be raised up for the sins of the world – on a horrible day called Good Friday.

That is why we dare call it Good! Jesus suffered sin’s punishment once and for all – for all people – for all sins. And with that punishment – He took sin’s guilt and sin’s shame into Himself. What looked like the end there on Calvary Hill – was really a new beginning! The reason for Christmas – is so that people might have – the hope of a new beginning. And the message of Epiphany – is therefore one of hope and deliverance – even for the weakest and most helpless members of society.

But when Jesus brought that message of hope and deliverance to His hometown of Nazareth in Galilee – so bad was His reception – that it is not known – if He ever went home again.

The people of His hometown took him to the edge of a cliff and threw rocks at Him until He disappeared from their sight. What was so disturbing in His message? And what about His message – continues to disturb us – today – on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday?

Well – I can tell you what it is. Jesus spoke like a prophet. And prophets blast us out of our comfort zone. They challenge our view – of the world – of ourselves – **and** of our values – and our faith. They call us to be the people – God the Father – created us to be. And **that** can be downright terrifying.

It is much easier to rail against the prophets – and chase them away – that it is to look deep within ourselves – and honestly examine our own motivations – our own priorities – our own shortcomings. But Jesus calls us – our nation that claims to be specially favored by God in history – and Jesus calls our community of Clintonville – to conduct that honest inventory. And He stands ready – to lead us on a new path of life.

Jesus' message is – that God's care and grace and mercy – are universal. God's care and grace and mercy extend even to the most helpless of society – extends even to the fetus in the womb – and embryo in the Petri dish – and that therefore – **all human life is sacred** – and **no one has the right – no one has the right – to play God – when it comes to life issues!** To think differently – places one in the category of Adolf Hitler – and Dr. Josef Mengele – in the concentration camps of World War II – with his “noble” experiments – in the name of medical research.

That message applies to all of us today – not just to the villains of the darkened pages of history in the past. It applies equally to Hollywood actors – and to the American Congress – now tempted to play God. If that is upsetting to us – then perhaps it ought to be. But that is the message of Jesus our Master – to me – to you – to Michael J. Fox – and to our new congressman. It is a message we need to share – so that hearts and minds will be changed. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds + in Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*