

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,  
Within my heart that it may be  
A quiet chamber kept for Thee. *Amen.*  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #123, v. 13)

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**St. Luke 1:31-35, 38** – The angel Gabriel said to Mary: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. 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, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” / And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” / And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”... / And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (ESV)

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**I. The angel Gabriel said to Mary: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus.”**

This scene has a specific context, a context that stretched back thousands of years. The reason an angel of the almighty God appeared to a young woman named Mary is because of another woman who lived long before this, all the way back in the beginning of time. That woman had a blissful and holy existence with her husband in a beautiful garden. They had no sin. They felt no pain. They lacked nothing.

But then a tempter came to the woman. “Wouldn’t you like to have even more?” he said. The woman gave in to the temptation, and so did her husband. They ate fruit from the one tree God had forbidden. Now they had sin. Now they knew pain. Now they were left with nothing. They hid from the presence of their Creator!

But God still loved them. He had mercy on them. He told the tempter, “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*” (Gen. 3:15). Adam thought the LORD was referring to Eve and her firstborn son (3:20, 4:1). But He was especially referring to another woman—to Mary, lowly Mary, Mary of Nazareth, who wouldn’t be born for several thousands of years.

In this evening’s reading, we see that God keeps His promises. He sent an angel to tell Mary that she was the one. She was the one who would bear the Son who would crush the head of Satan. She was the one who would bear the Son who would pay for all the sin of Adam & Eve and all their descendants. She was the one who would bear the Son whose name revealed His purpose. He was to be called “Jesus”—the One who saves.

Hymn: #119 – “Away in a Manger”

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## II. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

When Jesus lay there “asleep on the hay,” He did not look very impressive; He did not look so “great.” He looked like an ordinary little baby who needed what all babies need – milk, sleep, and new diapers. But this particular Baby was much more than met the eye. In the mystery of all mysteries, “*the Son of the Most High*,” the Son of God, had taken on human flesh.

We heard how His coming was prophesied right after the fall into sin. But the plan was actually in place before God the Father made the world and everything in it. God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to write that our Lord Jesus Christ “*was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you*” (1Pe. 1:20).

The Son of God was incarnate, the Christ was made manifest, “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (Joh. 1:14). This great Lord, this “*Son of the Most High*,” came in the most unexpected of ways. He did not come down from heaven on the clouds in all His brilliant glory. He did not enter the world in the court of a powerful king. He came to the womb of a poor woman and was born in a little town. He “*made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*” (Phi. 2:7, NKJV).

But why would He do this? Why would the God of eternity come down to us in this way? The apostle Paul tells us, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich*” (2Co. 8:9).

Hymn: #123.1-4,15 – “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

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## III. “And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

These words describe both the divine and human natures of the Christ: “*And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David.*” The Lord God, God the Father from eternity, sent His only-begotten Son to join a human line. It was the line of Adam and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the line of Jesse and his son David who was called from keeping sheep to be Israel’s king.

God promised that after David’s death, He would raise up an Offspring of David after him and “*establish the throne of his kingdom forever*” (2Sa. 7:13). That promise endured one thousand years through the crumbling and captivity of Judah and its return from exile until the birth of Jesus. Although the glory had long since departed from David’s royal line, Mary could trace her lineage to him.

More importantly, Mary was tied to the Promise, the Promise first made in the Garden of Eden, a Seed of Promise passed down from generation to generation, until it was planted in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit. The Child in her womb was both Man and God, both David’s Son and David’s Lord.

Though the world did not know it, He was a great King. He was the greatest King who ever walked on this earth, and He still reigns. He reigns with power and grace over His people. He sits on the throne of a kingdom that has no end.

Hymn: #143.1-2,7-9 – “The Happy Christmas Comes Once More”

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**IV. And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God.”**

*“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”* Do we find it strange that Mary brings this up? Why does she feel compelled to mention her virginity? If Mary were living now, she would be told, “Mary, what you do with your body is no one’s business but yours.” But in fact what I do with my body and what you do with yours isn’t just our own business. What we do with our bodies is part of something bigger.

All who are baptized into Christ become part of His holy body. He was covered with our sins, so we would be clothed in His righteousness. He died in our place, so we would live. The apostle Paul writes that Christ *“died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised”* (2Co. 5:15).

It does matter that Mary was a virgin. It means that the child in her womb was not conceived in her by a sinful man. That would mean their child was a sinner like them. But Jesus had no sin. He was conceived in Mary’s womb by God the Holy Spirit and therefore was *“called holy.”* Jesus had to be holy, so that He could take the place of you and me and all people, and offer Himself as a holy sacrifice for our sins.

Hymn: #113.1-2,4 – “A Great and Mighty Wonder”

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**V. And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”** (ESV)

What a beautiful faith we find in Mary! She heard the stunning words of the angel which seemed to violate all sense, and she believed. *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”* Martin Luther wrote that at her faithful hearing of God’s Word, Mary conceived *“through her ear.”* The day the angel visited her was the day God became man, starting as a tiny embryo in her womb.

Our minds are unable to comprehend the incarnation of God. How could the God of the universe spend nine months growing in a dark womb? How could He who has no beginning and no end be born of a woman and cradled in her arms? We cannot understand it any more than Mary could.

But we can rejoice. We can give thanks that the eternal Son of God was born for us. He was born to let nails and spear pierce Him through. He was born to bear the cross for me, for you. We

don't understand it. We don't deserve it. But God declares it to us. "It is for you," He says. So we reply, each one of us, with a believing heart, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*

Hymn: #145 - "What Child Is This?"

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