

A Spiritual Spring for the Week

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Sermon Text: Colossians 1:15-18

Sermon Title: "The Child for All Time" (First Sunday of Advent)

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

December 2, 2012

The time to give birth is at hand. The first contraction happened hours ago. Doctors and nurses surround the mother, and convince her to push just one more time. The child is born, and expands his lungs with his first loud cry. The time and the date are marked down, and that information will go up on Facebook before the night arrives.

The date of a child's birth is familiar to us. My son was born on January 8, 1998, and my daughter born January 17, 2001. The time might be as familiar – mothers remember the time of their children's birth better than fathers. Parker was born at 2:20pm, while Amanda was born 1:01pm (and, yes, I checked those times with my wife only after already knowing them).

When it comes to Jesus' birth, however, we are not sure of the time or date. The exact date is not known, other than to say that Jesus was born most likely in the spring. We celebrate Christmas on December 25, because that used to be a Roman pagan holiday in which the god Mithras was worshipped. Mithras was

called the Sun of Righteousness. Christians replaced that nonsense with celebrating the birth of Christ, because he is the true Sun of Righteousness according to the prophet Malachi (even Son of Righteousness).¹ So Jesus most likely was born in spring rather than in the winter.

On the other hand, we know that Jesus was born during the night, only because Luke tells us about the angels going to visit a group of shepherds who were watching their flocks by night.² But we don't know if it was 9:00pm or midnight or 2:30 in the morning. Between 6:00pm and 6:00am, Jesus was born.

But let us stretch our brains a bit, and say that nobody knows when Jesus was actually "born." Nobody knows because nobody was around. In fact, the earth was around. Jesus has always been. Yes, we might be able to guess with reasonable accuracy when he took on flesh and arrived to earth, but no one knows when Jesus came to be in the universe. Jesus is God, *The Gospel of John* tells us, and God has always existed. So God the Son with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is timeless.

We may read about the "birth" of Jesus in more

¹ Cf. Malachi 4:2.

² Cf. Luke 2:8.

than two places in the New Testament. Matthew and Luke are not the only ones to tell us the story about Jesus' beginning. Paul writes to the Colossians, and in the middle of his first chapter he tells them, "[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... He is before all things."³ This is the same Paul who tried his darnedest to hunt down Christians and sentence them to death. Paul, who didn't think much about Jesus at first, shares with us a great mystery about our Savior. His understanding of Jesus is spectacular, because Jesus was not just a good man who walked the earth, telling parables and healing people. Jesus was more than a man who was born in a little town just over six miles south of Jerusalem. Jesus was before Mary and Joseph pledged themselves to get married, before David was called as king of Israel in place of King Saul, before Adam and Eve could take a bite of that forbidden fruit. Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, Paul tells us through the Colossian letter. Is Paul tells us that Jesus existed before creation began, before the moon and stars and galaxies were formed? Jesus was there not as a baby nor as a man but as God?

Let us move to *The Book of Revelation*. Believe it or

³ 1 Colossians 1:15, 17.

not, this book about the end times talks about Jesus' "birth." John is writing to a church in Laodicea, which is in western Turkey today, and he tells the people that an angel of the Lord is coming to visit them. This almost sounds like the Christmas story. This angel arrives to the Christians of Laodicea, and he says that the Amen has a word to share with them. The Amen being Christ, and Christ is also addressed as the True and Faithful Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.⁴

The Greek word that John uses means origin, beginning, the first thing or person in a series. Do we know what an archetype is? The words *archetype* and *prototype* means the same thing, so I will use the word interchangeably. According to Wikipedia, an archetype is an object or an idea, from which other things or ideas are copied, patterned, or emulated. For example, Apple or Microsoft develops a product, such as a new cell phone or computer. They don't develop the thing and then sell it immediately. The phone or computer they create might not work for people. Apple or Microsoft might not be entirely happy with what they created. So these companies develop a product as a prototype, or archetype. They use it as a model to build other phones and computers with more

⁴ Cf. Revelation 3:14.

improvements. They keep going back to the original design, add a little here, subtract a little there, and then finally they have the product they want to sell to us.

Christ is the Archetype, the Prototype of all creation. This means he was around before the universe could be fashioned. All time and space take their lead from Christ, the Beginning of all creation. Yet, when it comes to Christ as our Archetype or Prototype, there need not be any improvements done to him. Christ is perfect in every way. Christ is the pure Example of what creation ought to look like, how creation ought to be. We keep going back to Christ, our Archetype/Prototype, not to improve Christ but to improve ourselves. Christ is our shining Example of how to love God with everything we have, and how to love our neighbors as ourselves. He is the ultimate Model that we need to keep going back to him to add a little here and subtract a little there to ourselves. By following Christ, we learn how to be God's people.

But if Christ is our Model to which we return every day, do not think that God the Father presented his Son as our Archetype/Prototype for the first time in Bethlehem. Do not think that 2000 years ago, God like Apple or Microsoft finally fashioned the most perfect human being that could ever live, and then like

Apple or Microsoft presented his Son to us in a manger, so we could buy and own him. God the Father and God the son, and God the Holy Spirit, have always been. Christ was around before the universe could be fashioned. All time and space take their lead from Christ. As *The Book of Revelation* attests, Jesus is the Beginning of the creation of God.

No matter what we believe about the origins of the universe – the universe was started by a Big Bang or something else – before atoms could come together and form space, Christ was the Archetype/Prototype for those atoms to do what they needed to do. Before the elements of hydrogen, helium, lithium, beryllium, and all the other known elements on the Periodic Table could become real, Christ was already the ultimate Model for those elements to be fashioned. There is no way we could ever imagine a time, if we can call it a time, in which time did not exist. We cannot imagine the universe not being around. But Christ was there before time and space, before Big Bangs and galaxies could be created. Christ was there as the Beginning of the creation of God.

The reason why we are filling our heads with all these nearly impossible yet complete fantastic things is so that this year we might see Jesus in a different

light. The One we wait for has always been around. He has always been Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior of the world. Maybe not in human form but always our Lord, before we were born, before our great grandparents were born, and yes before the first human beings were born.

I read this wonderful example from a book that used the illustration of Queen Elizabeth II to make a point. Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926, but at that moment she wasn't queen. She was just Elizabeth. Nobody thought of her as a queen of England, and nobody thought she might ever become the queen. There would have to be major changes in her family structure in order for her to ascend to the throne. Those changes occurred, and in 1952 Elizabeth finally became the queen. People have addressed her as queen for the last 60+ years.

However, Jesus Christ did not become Savior on the day of his birth. He did not have to ascend toward any crown or throne in order to take on the title of Messiah. At the moment of his birth Jesus was already Lord, Messiah, Savior. Unlike Queen Elizabeth, Jesus Christ has always been around, looking toward to the time of his physical birth and entrance into the world, moving toward his crucifixion and resurrection to free us from sin and death.

When we sing about him as the Baby born in Bethlehem, we just might see more than a Baby. When we sing about the choirs of angels announcing the birth of a Savior, we might think differently about what it means for Jesus to be born. We might realize that this Savior has lived for all eternity. He entered the world like every other baby does on a certain day in history during the night, but that was not the beginning of his existence.

The Eternal One through whom the world was made was himself made human. The Eternal One who was made human made the world and us to live in eternity with him. There is no limit to the power of his new birth and his new life. We receive that powerful life and give great thanks to God, when we think of the manger and Bethlehem and Christ the Child for all time.