

## Four Words Describe MIRACLE!

*“The Word Became Flesh” and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1:14*

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Welcome to the third Sunday in Advent. Our theme this year is from the Iona community's Christmas carol we love to sing:

Who would think that what was needed,  
To transform and save the earth  
Might not be a plan or army,  
Proud in purpose proved in worth?  
Who would think, despite derision,  
That a child should lead the way?

**God surprises earth with heaven,  
Coming here on Christmas Day!**

Given what has happened this year in the world and our nation, and what we as individuals have gone through this year, our focus this Advent is, **God Surprises...!** God Surprises us with His **timing**; God surprises us with **answered prayer**. Today we want to understand, God surprises us with **Miracles!**

Our natural reaction is, *“Of course! Miracles surprise us”* The nature of a miracle is that it catches us unawares and astonishes us. Miracles are God's nature; every-thing He does is a miracle; there is nothing He does that is not a miracle. To be surprised when God acts, is to be a witness of His character at work!

Of everything God has made on the earth, under and above the earth, human life is the most precious thing to God, and the birth of a child is at the core of God's plan. The creation account in Genesis teaches us, God created an adult individual, first by forming the individual with His own hands, then making the individual a person by breathing His life, His DNA into that person! The

second person God made from that first person, that **together** they would be the complete person of God on earth. God's mandate to them was, *multiply my spirit that is in you*. The birth of a child is at the core of God's plan.

In the genealogical line of Jesus, several couples were unable to have a child, until God intervened. Abraham was 100 years old when he and Sarah had Isaac. Isaac's son Jacob's first love was Rachel, but he was tricked into first marrying her sister Leah. Many years after he finally married Rachel, she had Joseph (the one with the "Coat of many Colours") and she died giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. The prophet Samuel's mother Hannah could not have a child, until Eli the priest saw her praying and assured her that God had heard her prayer and would answer it. Over thousands of years, the danger of losing continuity in the genealogical line of Jesus was so real, each time God intervened.

700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah alerted people to watch for God's sign: *A virgin girl will get pregnant. She will bear a son and (she will) name him Immanuel (God-with-Us).*<sup>1</sup> Those who heard these words would have thought, *it is normal for a father to name the child*, but Isaiah referred to a **woman** who will name her son, **Immanuel**. 700 years later, the Angel told Mary, *You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.*<sup>2</sup>...*Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel even before he was conceived*<sup>3</sup>.

Isaiah describes this special "Son" named Immanuel, *"to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, ... who will take over the governing of the world. He will be known by many names: Amazing Counsellor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (of a kingdom that is complete, perfect and Holy). His ruling authority will grow, and there will be no limits to the wholeness, completeness He brings. He will rule from the historic throne of David over that promised kingdom. He will put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing (justice) and right living (Holiness),*

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 7:14

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:31

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:21

*beginning now and lasting always. The passion, zeal and enthusiasm of God will achieve all this.*<sup>4</sup>

What a fantastic description of the One who is to come! But we have a problem: the only way we understand this description of God, One with absolute power and authority, is by comparing Him to the military might of the most powerful nation on earth.

As a result, we have been expecting God to arrive in majesty and power, wielding absolute power and authority, in a manner which is more powerful than the most powerful nation on earth! Let's remind ourselves, in no way does God need to prove Himself! He does not need to show us the might of His power and His absolute authority for us to believe Him and trust Him. Those who know Him from personal life-circumstances, who have experienced His healing, His protection, His guidance and direction, who know Him as provider and sustainer, know He is God.

Let's pick up the story when it is time for God to intervene in human history.

First, to prepare the way for the coming of the Christ, an elderly couple who knew it was no longer possible to have a child due to their age, were told they would have a special son who *“will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and He will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”*<sup>5</sup>

Then, an unmarried girl is informed by God's Angel, she will conceive a child before she has a husband - the Holy Spirit would father the child. Mary earnestly desired it **might** be, and firmly believed it **would** be as the Angel said, so she said her "**Amen**" to the angel's message (*Behold! I am the handmaid of the Lord*<sup>6</sup>!)

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 9:6-7

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:17

<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:38

Having said “Yes” and “Amen” to the Angel, this young girl has a big problem on her hands: *how will I convince my husband I am innocent!* and an even bigger problem, *What shall I do if my husband rejects me?* She seeks the companionship of an older cousin Elisabeth, who had a miraculous conception. Together they praised God for His plan in action and encouraged each other to trust God and His plan.

What seems outrageous to us, what appears to human wisdom and knowledge as impossible, if we let God take control, what He does is a **MIRACLE**. What He does is beyond human understanding and reasoning, and can be done only by One who is God.

But the miracles at Christmas are preceded by a miracle in Heaven.

In our finite minds, we want to know the details of *what* happened, and we want to know *when* it happened. So, when Jesus says, *I saw satan fall from Heaven like a bolt of lightning*<sup>7</sup>, following what is believed to be satan’s rebellion in Heaven, He is describing an event which took place before God created time, which took place in eternity, where there is no time.

Now, I stress, in **my** imagination, based on what I have read, I think the decision that Jesus God’s Son should come into satan’s domain and defeat Him once and for all eternity, was confirmed at that time.

Only God’s Son could achieve this, and we get a glimpse of God’s pleasure at His Son’s obedience, when at Jesus’ baptism, those present heard God say, *This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased*<sup>8</sup>. What was God pleased about? He was pleased with Jesus’ complete obedience and absolute dedication to live in a world infested with rebellion against God (sin), then go through and experience death in its worst form, to break the stranglehold satan had to hold us back from eternity with God, and death was that stranglehold.

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 10:18

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17

This was only possible because “*The Word Became Flesh*” four words that describes the greatest miracle of all time, that ONLY God could achieve, “The Word took on human form, God Himself released His Son from heaven, to become one of us, from conception through to the prime of His life when He experienced death in full force. No one has ever survived death by crucifixion, neither did the Son of God - He died a human death on the cross. **BUT** death could not hold Him forever, because the power of life is greater than the power of death!

Imagine the humility of the Creator when the Creator became His created. Imagine, the creator of an item of fashion clothing, becomes the clothing itself and is wrapped around a human form and loses his identity as Creator - what humiliation to make oneself to be limited by what you have created.

God does that. We tend think of the Son of God humbling Himself by leaving Heaven and denying Himself of the luxuries He is used to, because we think in human terms: what will I do if I don't have at least one good meal a day; what will I do if I don't wear decent clothes; what will I do if I cannot work ... what will I do if .... does not happen.

But God thought nothing of releasing His Son from the security of Heaven, because He knew His Son would rely on His Father's wisdom, His Father's protection and His Father's love. Jesus left Heaven, secure in the knowledge that His Father's plan to release His Son into the jaws of death, would result in His resurrection.

This is the **REAL** Christmas Miracle! *The Word became flesh*, God released His Son from Heaven, clothed in human form, and came to us to live among us.

Everyone says, this was a strange year, a year that wasn't, a non-year. It is said, hind sight is 20-20 vision. Will the year 2020 teach us with clarity, lessons about life, intimacy and relationships, about the real value of human life and things?

As we reflect on the year and wonder what *really* happened, God offers us a special invitation. As we celebrate the event when God clothed Himself with the human form and came to live among us, He invites us to accept the invitation of His Son, *No one comes to the Father except through the Son*<sup>9</sup>, the Son who clothes **us** with His own righteousness and presents us to the Father saying, *I am no longer in the world; yet these whom You gave to me, they remain in the world while I return to You. Holy Father, keep them safe and loyal, and preserve them by the power of Your Name which You have given Me, that they may be united as one, even as WE are united as One*, Jesus' prayer in the garden at Gethsemane.

The **REAL** miracle at Christmas starts with the Word taking on human form, but the miracle is complete when **we** respond by accepting God's invitation to be clothed with the Righteousness of Christ, shed of the sin of this world and made presentable before our Holy God.

Four words that changed the universe: '*The Word became flesh*'. No truth ever revealed matters more, comforts more, unsettles more. Christmas is truly supernatural.

Our Prime Minister, politicians and medics talk about '*saving Christmas*', but God's plan was that Christmas would save us, from the brokenness of this world, to participate in the complete Holiness of eternity with God.

**AMEN.**

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<sup>9</sup> John 14:6