

John 7:40–43 After hearing his words, some of the people said, “**This is truly the Prophet.**” ⁴¹Others said, “**This is the Christ.**” But some said, “**Surely the Christ does not come from Galilee, does he?**” ⁴²**Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Christ comes from David’s descendants and from the little town of Bethlehem where David lived?**” ⁴³**So the people were divided because of him.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. A Christmas miracle. We talk about them jokingly at Christmas time when something works out, from the turkey not burning to an ornament not breaking, we say, it was a Christmas miracle! Movies have been made and probably watched a few times over the holidays about a Christmas miracle. And I can think of a few instances where sitcoms jumped in on the act as well.

Now that Christmas is behind us, now that the dust of the season has settled, now that the world has moved on, now we can focus on the real miracle of Christmas. And, there’s actually two. First, that God became man to save us from our sins. And second, that God revealed it to me, even to me and even to you.

We see it in the first verse before us this morning. The text starts out by saying, “**After hearing his words...**” Whose words? The preacher’s words? The Rabbi’s words? The words of any other man? No. The man standing before them was not just any other man. He was not *just* a man at all. God had *become* man, took on human flesh. So the one standing before them, the one speaking to them, was God himself.

The creator had become part of his creation. The law maker subject to his own laws, and to the punishment for breaking them. The one who’s justice is supreme subject to that justice. The almighty God who is present everywhere all at once, took on flesh and blood. The one for whom, through whom and to whom are all things became thirsty and hungry and tired.

Immanuel, God with us, stood before them, their creator who knew them before birth, who could call them each by name, knew their thoughts, wants, desires, their futures etc. Wow! Miracle number one!

Miracle number two: Look how they reacted to Jesus. “**This is truly the prophet. This is the Christ!**” And they didn’t gather this from how he looked. Isaiah tells us the the Christ’s appearance would be like that of any other man, and in fact he would **have no beauty or majesty to**

attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

That these people knew the truth about who Jesus was was the result of the the miracle of God’s gift of faith. And how did this gift of faith become theirs? John writes that it was **after hearing his words. Faith comes from hearing the message of Christ.**

How is that a miracle? When you consider that God is completely independent of anything and everything, did he need to reach out to us with this message of salvation? The answer is no. God did not have to become man for himself. He did not have to be a Savior for himself. He did not have to leave the paradise of heaven and come to our earth, be subject to his laws, place himself under his justice, confine himself to a physical body and all that comes along with that. The miracle is not only that he did this, but that he did that for us, for sinners like you and me.

And when you consider that fact, that we are sinners, dead, blind, enemies of God, there’s even more of a miracle here. For we hear news every day and believe it to be true, all on our own. Ahh, but this news, this message, who we are by nature rejects it 100% of the time. To our sinful flesh, God is the enemy. We can’t see his truth and even if we could, dead in our sins we have no ability to do anything with it.

So, who we are by nature responds to the gospel like those people before Jesus who said, **Surely the Christ does not come from Galilee!** And they were right. But how hard would it have been to ask Jesus where he was from, where he had been born? But they didn’t bother. In their rejection they were satisfied with knowing that their wisdom and their knowledge disproved this one to be the Christ. Though they heard his words, they found a way to dismiss it, to justify their rejection. And in a tragic bit of irony, they were using Scripture to do so. **Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Christ comes from David’s descendants and from the little town of Bethlehem where David lived?**

It’s a little scary to think about, who we are by nature rejects this message of salvation and that every sinful thought, word, and action plays a part in that rejection. The scary thing is that the devil uses who we are by nature and what we do as sinners against us to make us think that this message isn’t true, at least not for me. And Satan will even use Scripture against us. “Doesn’t the Scripture say, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” You’re not! “Doesn’t the Scripture say that those who live this way will not inherit eternal life.” That’s you!

It's a miracle that I haven't rejected God's message of salvation, that I haven't lost it. But it's not my miracle. It's God's. It's a miracle that he keeps working every single day, not only in my life and when Satan attacks me, but throughout your life and when Satan attacks you.

So what should we do when we doubt? What should we do when the devil attacks, when we hear his voice, his lies? Listen to Jesus' voice. Hear *his* words! Remember the two miracles of Christmas.

First, God became man to save sinners. Jesus was born in our world, yes, in Bethlehem as the Scriptures say, to place himself under his own laws — to be perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect — *for us*, and to subject himself to his own justice — to suffer the punishment for the sins of the world, all of yours and all of mine included. For this prophet, this Christ, would go on to live a perfect life, and then suffer and die on the cross to pay the price of every sin.

And second, he took that message of his life, death, and resurrection, of sins forgiven and death and the devil defeated, and he revealed it to you and me because he knew how much we would need it. He knew just how dead, and blind, spiteful we would be towards God by nature, and he revealed it anyways and gave us the faith to believe it. So that when we see, when we're shown, when we find that we have not lived a life worthy of eternal life, God has already secured it for us in heaven, and has given us the means to grasp it and hold on to it by faith, here in our hearts.

By now, with New Years behind us and Christmas *way* behind us, most people have turned their focus to the new year. And that gives people hope. But just because we call it a new year doesn't mean it's going to be any different. On the other hand, what we have to hold on to and take with us into this new year, that God became man to save us from my sins, and revealed it to us in his Word, fills us with the hope the world seeks, but will never know. Forgiveness, life, salvation, peace, joy... With gifts like these we are ready for whatever this life brings to our door.

There's something fitting about Christmas being in winter, a part of the season that we in the north might take for granted. In the middle of the cold, snowy, and what some might call a miserable time of year, God gives us the greatest news and works his greatest miracle. It's an added reminder to us that in the middle of this cold, dreary, some might even say at times, miserable life, God has provided for our greatest need. God has done it all. God became man, that I might become one with him. God became man that he would forever be one with us.

And then he made it mine, and he made it yours. He broke through our sinfulness, brought our sin hardened hearts back to life. There, through water and his word he made you *his* own, and made all that he did for you, *your* own. A great miracle indeed!

We talk about Christmas miracles, but we know they're just happy coincidences, save for 2. God became man. God revealed to you. May this true Christmas miracle bring us hope as we say good by to the old year, and look forward to the new and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen!