

Hope is Here

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

Sermon Title: Jesus is...

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Good morning!

It's great to be with you. If I haven't met you before my name is Scott Urbanek. I'm the college and missions pastor at Mercy Church. I love preaching to our church. It's a great joy for me anytime to get to do so. We've been in our advent series, Hope is here. My sermon will kind of be part 1 of a 2 of the story of Jesus birth. But, before we start today, let me ask you this. Have you ever met someone and immediately after meeting them you realize you have a lot in common? Maybe you're from the same hometown, or you went to the same college, or maybe you're both from a home of divorced parents. There's something special about those friendships, right? They get you in a way that other people don't. For me, my life has been full of different and at times unusual life experiences. For example, I was raised overseas until 5th grade. When I meet someone who was raised overseas, I know that there are some things about them that only I can really understand. Like, how moving back to the states, I didn't really feel American, culturally I felt like a Dominican. Why, that's where I grew up. Only someone raised in a similar circumstance can really understand what that's like. But in 5th grade, I moved to South

Florida, and grew up miles from where the Miami Hurricanes played football. So, I'm a huge canes fan. And when I see another Canes fan across the store and I hear "We got some Canes over here..." I know that they are probably from the Miami area. Why? That's what canes fans say. I have something in common with that person, I will understand things about how they grew up that the average person can't identify with. Or maybe it's something harder... I've had two traumatic experiences that have shaped who I am. I was sexually abused as a child and I nearly died in college. Both tough experiences, and unless you've been through it, it's hard to understand. And when I meet someone who's been through that. We have an instant bond that can be really strong and we find safety in each other. Whether commonalities are good or bad, when we have something in common with another person, it brings you together. It helps create a bond between people that can be really strong. It's really special! And it's why we love friendships like that. But, when we think about Jesus. We rarely think of him in the same way. We typically tell people that we want an older more mature believer who has been through the same things to help you through it. All the while missing the reality that Jesus came to earth for the very purpose of identifying with us!

As we look at the birth of Jesus, that's some of what we're going to look at today. Jesus came to earth to identify with us and for us to identify with him.

Today, we're going to be in Luke Chapter 2:1-7. And I'm going to show you three things. **Jesus is: 1) Like us 2) Not like us 3) Making us like him.** Let me pray...

Overview: All of history led to this moment

But before we do that, I'm going to walk through the first 7 verses and show you the larger picture of what's going on historically and make a few connections for you as to what Luke is saying and why it's so important. These 7 verses are going to show us how all of human history has led to the birth of this child. It's also important to remember that Luke is a physician & a historian. So, when you see all of these names, cities, towns, & people, Luke isn't just trying to fill in space like I did on my high school English papers. No, every single word in this text is packed with significance. I'm going to walk through these seven verses and show you how all of history points to this child being the messiah. And then, I'm going to show you who this child is and why it matters for us. Let me pray.

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Right away, we're introduced to two new people. We see Caesar Augustus & Quirinius. Caesar Augustus was the

Emperor of Rome, and Quirinius was one of his governors tasked with executing this decree in his region. All we need to know about them was that these weren't good guys. Caesar came to power through some pretty bloody wars. This decree was a political power move by Caesar Augustus. As a new Emperor, he wanted to see how big his kingdom was for two reasons: he wanted to know how many people he could tax. And second, he wanted to see how many "of age" males he had in case he needed to draft people for war. It was a complete power move by an egotistical ruler. This is the context of when Jesus was being born. He wasn't being born into a nice and sweet time. He was born into a lot of darkness and chaos.

³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Here's where this passage starts to be pretty amazing. Remember, Luke is acting as a historian here. We see that everyone went to their own town to be registered. Joseph had to leave Galilee, from Nazareth, to Bethlehem for this registration because he was from the lineage of David. Don't miss what's happening. Here's what we know through the dozens of prophecies like Micah 2,

Amos 11, and I Samuel 17: The messiah, the one who was supposed to save Israel was supposed to be born in Bethlehem, David's City. The problem is that Mary and Joseph are in Galilee. But, that's no problem for the Lord. No biggie. He'll just orchestrate a decree and registration of one of the largest empires in history to get one man and one woman to get to the exact city they need to be in order to fulfill his promises. Church, This moment right here, this is the moment that God has been moving toward since the beginning of time. Micah 5:2 says the baby was to be born in Bethlehem and this "...one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." When he says from Old, what he's meaning is the old old prophecies in scripture. Like Genesis 3:15, the promise that God made to Adam and Eve, that from the woman would be born a messiah. He would save the world from their sins. And to the Devil, the promised that this child would destroy him. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. This is not any baby... No this is the promised one. This is the one that all of history has been waiting for. This is the messiah that would save the world from their sins.

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

I love in verse 6 it says that "the time came". The time came for her to give birth. It didn't say. She happened to go into labor. No, no! God timed this. It wasn't happenstance. It wasn't coincidence. It was God's power and providence that brought this to be. God orchestrated this. From the beginning of time. Every promise made to God's people, every covenant, was planned and executed to perfection by our sovereign God!

There is something strange in this story as well. Isn't it weird that God was moving and orchestrating all of the Roman world to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. If that's true? Why was Jesus born in a manger? In a place for livestock? Most likely a dirty cave. Born with no doctor around and placed in a feeding trough soon after being born? Did God forget to book the Airbnb? Did he overlook that detail? C'mon, Lord, the devil's in the details, right? No, this was intentional. Which is going to inform the rest of our time today. I'm going to show in this last verse, that this Jesus, who was born in humble circumstances changes everything. Jesus changes everything. So, I'm going to show you who Jesus is... I'm going to show you three things about Jesus. I'm going to show you that Jesus is... 1) Like us. 2) Not like us. 3) Making us like him.

Who is Jesus? What is he like? Why does it matter? Let's look at the book of Hebrews

Jesus is:

1) Like us.

Let's look at Hebrews 4:15-16 ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

It says we don't have high priest (Jesus represents us to God the Father) who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. In order for Jesus to be our high priest. In order for him to represent us before God the Father, he had to experience everything we experienced here on earth. This is what Jesus came to do. Jesus was born so that he could be like us. He knows exactly what it's like to be a human. He was as human as we are. This is important because Jesus wouldn't be able to represent us if he didn't know what it was like to feel pain, to be tested by the devil, to have a flu, to be gripped by grief as a friend dies, to feel betrayal from friends, to struggle with a family business, to be gossiped about, and to be afraid. Jesus has been through the full spectrum of what it means to be human. I don't know

about you, but, I love that one of the reasons God came was to sympathize with us. He entered the mess. He wasn't indifferent to the pain of the world. John Stott says it this way, "In a world full of suffering and pain, I can't imagine following a god that's immune to it." I think there is a lot of you that need to hear this today. God knows. You can never tell Jesus that he doesn't understand what you're going through when you confess sin or weakness to God. You can almost hear him say, "Yeah, Scott. It makes sense that you feel the way you do. That's hard. I've been there myself. But, that's why I came to save you." There is no scenario of sin that he hasn't been tested with. Yet, he was without sin. This is why in 1 Peter 2, the apostle calls us to pray for all people. "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the *man* (emphasis mine) Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." Jesus mediates for us. He goes to God on our behalf. At salvation, he tells God the Father that we are his. Purchased by his blood. Why? Because he was a man. He knows!

Jesus is:

2) Not like us.

So we see that Jesus is like us in that he can identify with everything we go through as human beings. But, he's not like us in that when he was presented with the

opportunities to sin, he said no. Let's look at Hebrews 7: 26-28

²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

You see, Jesus was completely like us in that he can sympathize and identify with our struggles and temptation. But he's also not like us because of his sinless life. He was holy, innocent, unstained and separated from sinners. Not separated, like he didn't hang out with them. He did that all the time. No, separate because he was in the world yet not stained by it. In verse 28 it says that he didn't need to offer sacrifices daily for his own sin, because he was sinless. But he also didn't have to do it daily for the people because he went to the cross to purchase our sin once and for all.

There's actually a much bigger picture that that comes along with this. Let's look at another reason he is our high priest. He's our high priest, our representative because we were all born in Adam. We have inherited from Adam and Eve, their sinful nature. We need the truer and better Adam. This all goes back to the garden. Our first representatives, our parents, Adam and Eve. They were

at one point sinless. They had an unbroken relationship with the world, their marriage, and with God. In fact, God used to walk with them in the cool of the day. Not sure what that means exactly, but it sounds awesome! But, they eventually ended up sinning against God when they were tempted by the devil. Let's look for a moment at what the devil tempted them with. And if you look closely, it's the same sinful patterns we struggle with as well. We won't flip over there right now, but basically, here's what happened.

Satan was tempting her to eat the forbidden fruit and Eve said... What we see here is the major sin categories. Lust of the flesh: it was good for food. Her flesh wanted it. It would bring her comfort. Lust of the eyes: it stimulated the eyes and she coveted it. Pride of life: It would make her like God she took it. Can anyone relate? We all struggle with lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and with pride. And we sin in these ways all the time. We needed a savior who was tempted like us, yet was without sin. But Where Adam and Eve failed, Christ was victorious! We needed the God-man Jesus Christ.

In Luke 4, Jesus went through the same set of circumstances that our old parents did. Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness and in verse 3.

Lust of the flesh:

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

C’mon Jesus, you’ve been out here in the wilderness for 40 days. Aren’t you hungry? Just turn that stone into bread. Regain your strength outside of God. Jesus said no. “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Quoting scripture. Like eve, many of us love our comforts. We try to satisfy ourselves outside of God. If we don’t like our circumstances we go to our comforts. Food, sex, alcohol, Instagram, you name it. But, Jesus didn’t do that. He found satisfaction in his father.

Lust of the eyes:

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”

Look Jesus. Look with your eyes all that you can have if you would worship me. If you worship me, All of these kingdom’s will be yours. Doesn’t it look amazing? Jesus said, no. “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” Quoting scripture. Like eve, there are things we see with our eyes and we have to have it.

Pride of life:

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,¹⁰ for it is written, ““He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ ¹¹ and ““On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.””

C’mon Jesus, if you’re God. Then jump off this temple and see if the angels will catch you. He’s trying to get a prideful and angry response from Jesus. Yet again, he responds with scripture saying, “you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Why was it important that Jesus had victory over temptation? Because the world has been in Adam. Before our own personal relationships with Jesus, we all walk in the sin of Adam and Eve. We have to. It’s our nature. But, Jesus was tempted as we are, so that he could defeat sin entirely. He was God. Who lived this life perfectly, with no sin. So that when God the Father killed his son Jesus on the cross. The righteous anger of God for sin could be atoned. Jesus is the one. The God-man. He had to die because he isn’t like us. He wasn’t a sinner. He died in the place of sinners like you and me!

He also did this because we can now go to God with our sin struggles and confess to someone who can not only sympathize, but he also knows the way out of your sin. When we sin and take it to him its like he says, “Yeah,

Scott. I've been tempted like that too. I've dealt with that too. Follow me, I'll show you your way out." He can identify, but he's also had victory. He can show us the way out.

We've seen that he's like us, he's not like us, now we'll see that

Jesus is:

3) Making us like him.

a. In His Holiness

Flip with me over to Hebrews 10:14. It says, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." Jesus became the God-man so that he can sanctify us, or make us like him. When Jesus saves you, things start to change. What I tell our college students is that sanctification isn't something we have to work to earn. It's a promise that God has made. He will make us like him. This means that when we were in Adam, we had a taste for sin. It's what we enjoyed and wanted. But, when Jesus saves us, he starts to change our taste and desires. We start to not want the taste of sin any longer. We want develop a pallet for things that are holy, good, and honorable. Does this mean that there are some sins that we will never struggle with on this earth, no. We will always struggle, but there will be growth and we are no longer bound by our sin. We're not slaves to sin like we were when we lived in Adam. The bondage of

sin has been broken because Jesus broke the chains of sin for us by filling us with his Holy Spirit. When it says, that he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, it doesn't mean that we're now sinless. It means that when God looks at us, he looks at us as he looks at Jesus, perfect. Jesus' perfect sinless record is credited to us. And the greatest truth is that one day, When we die, we will be perfected. In heaven, we will struggle with lust no more. We will never be prideful again. We will never seethe with anger anymore or feel slighted again. We will be like him. I can't wait for that.

Lastly...

b. In His Purpose

For this one, let's jump back into our Luke 2 story. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. What are we seeing here? We're seeing Jesus be sent out by his father to enter into a dark world. But, he didn't enter like we would have thought. Jesus was born in humble circumstances. Jesus, was sent as a venerable child to be raised by a scared young mother & step-father. They were everyday people with a special child. God himself.

Like Jesus, God is sending us into a dark and broken world. Jesus' purpose was to seek and save the Lost. He

wasn't born to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Like Jesus, we do the same. The purpose of our lives is to know this Jesus, and to make him known all over the earth. All he's asking us to do is to make introductions. He wants other people to enjoy being fully known and fully understood and fully loved by a God that can sympathize with their whole life story. So, go to a friend, family member and make the introduction... Shoot maybe across the world.

Jesus being born as a child communicates to us and to the world that he's not indifferent to our suffering and pain. He sees it. And there's only one way out. Through a personal relationship with the God-man, Jesus Christ. He's the only one in the entire universe that truly knows you. He came as a child to save you and through you, he might save others.

Church, help us in this. Let's join in on introducing the world to Jesus. You can do that through CMO. Story of one of our missionaries.