

Sermon Transcript

12.28.2025

Luke 1:39-45

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- Good morning. Hopefully you had a good Christmas.
- Anyone get everything you had on your Christmas list? Most of it? None of it?
- Raise your hands if you've already checked out of 2025 and are ready for 26?
- Who has already taken down all your decorations and thrown out your tree?
- Well, some of you may have already moved on, but Christmas is my favorite time of the year so we're going to really stretch it out by spending one more week considering the glories of the incarnation this morning.
- Speaking of the incarnation, I asked this question last year at one of our culture and theology seminars and I'll tell you beforehand that it is a bit of a trick question so I won't have you raise your hand or shout it out lest you be embarrassed. But think about the answer to the question:
 - In what city did Christ's incarnation take place?
 - If you answered Bethlehem, you're wrong. That's incorrect.
 - But, didn't we just spend all Christmas Eve walking through Micah 5 and the prophecy that Christ would be born in Bethlehem? Yep. So, what do we mean by the incarnation didn't take place in Bethlehem? Well, there is a difference between the incarnation of Christ and the birth of Christ.
 - Perhaps you've never thought of that, but the word incarnate means taking on flesh or bodily form.
 - We tend to associate the incarnation with Christmas, but the incarnation actually happened about 9 months before Christmas given that the baby in the womb was fully human and thus God had already taken on flesh.
 - So technically, the incarnation actually takes place in Nazareth. That's when the Son of God first humbles Himself by taking on humanity.
 - As the great Herman Bavinck writes:
 - "the human nature formed in and out of Mary...from the earliest moment of conception was united with, and taken up into, the person of the Son." (Herman Bavinck)
 - So if we really want to understand the incarnation, we can't skip over the conception and the Son of God's time in the womb.
 - So we'll consider that this morning by going back to Luke 1. Typically when the Christmas story is read from Luke, we start in Luke 1:26 with the arrival of Gabriel & his appearance to Mary. But then after that we kind of skip over the rest of chapter 1 in order to get to that famous passage in Luke 2 quoted in the Charlie Brown Christmas movie about a decree from Caesar Augustus.

- In fact, last year, I did exactly that. I preached three Christmas sermons including Christmas Eve. One was Luke 1:26-38, the second was Luke 2:1-7, and the third was Luke 2:8-14.
- What about chapter 1 vss. 39-80? That's a whole lot of biblical narrative to omit, but its mostly about John the Baptist, so we just kinda skip over it in telling the Christmas story.
- But, as we'll see in our text today, there's actually quite a bit about Christmas that we can see in vss. 39-45.
- So let's pray and then we'll dive in together.
- Self, others, me.

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39–40)

- We begin with a temporal marker. In those days. What days? The days described in the previous pericope. The days when Gabriel had appeared to Mary and prophesied the virgin birth. In those days and the phrase with haste show an immediate response on Mary's part.
- In my house we sometimes say that delayed obedience is _____ (what)? Disobedience.
- Delayed obedience is certainly better than perpetual disobedience, but neither is ideal. The proper faithful response is immediate obedience. And that's what Mary mirrors. In fact, that obedience will be hinted at later in the passage.
- Now, the passage doesn't tell us exactly why she goes with haste and immediacy. Whether Gabriel had told her to go or she just inferred it, we don't know.
- But we do know that at the very least, Gabriel had referenced Elizabeth in 1:36
 - *And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. (Luke 1:36)*
- So its reasonable to conclude that Mary senses in this or in some unrecorded words of the angel a call to go and visit her relative.
- Speaking of relative, that's a pretty generic word that could cover myriad familial relations. Since Mary is associated with the tribe of Judah and Elizabeth with Levi, we aren't sure of the exact nature of their relationship.
- But for whatever reason, Mary thinks it necessary to go so she ups and departs.
- Where she goes Luke makes clear with a series of prepositions that kind of home in with greater precision. First, she goes into the hill country and then into a town of Judah and then into the house of Zechariah.
- Now, this is quite the journey from Nazareth to south of Jerusalem, anywhere from 70-100 miles depending on the exact location & route. It would have taken about 3-5 days so while not as difficult as her later journey to Bethlehem when 9 months pregnant, this still was no quick pop in because she was in the neighborhood, not to mention the fact that the narrative doesn't mention anyone traveling with her so its at least implied that she makes the journey alone, if so, that would again stress the nature of her faithful obedience by raising the stakes on the danger and discomfort of the voyage.

- But she & her relative have a shared interest. Both experiencing miraculous motherhood. Elizabeth had conceived though older & barren, while Mary had conceived while a virgin.
- And even those miracles hinted at the respective importance of the children in their wombs. As a virginal conception is far more unbelievable & miraculous than that of an older woman, so the child born of Mary is infinitely more important than he who is born of Elizabeth.
- As John the Baptist says in the gospel of John, he who comes after me ranks before me. He does so because He was before me as we talked about on Christmas eve. According to Christ's humanity, He is younger than J the B, but according to His deity, He is eternal.
- But we'll get to the theological implications shortly.
- For now, let's look at vs. 41.

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit... (Luke 1:41)

- This is one of those passages that might be overlooked in discussions on the humanity of a fetus, but actually provides some helpful supplemental support to the Christian position on the sinfulness of the murder of life in the womb.
- For instance, notice the word that Luke uses. He calls it a baby. This is the same Greek word that will be used for baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloth and for the infants being brought to Jesus to bless in chapter 18. It's the same word because they are the same essence, the same nature, the same type of being.
- One of the things we talked about in this year's culture & theology on abortion is that there is no logical distinction to be made between the ontology or essential being of a child in the womb & a child which has been born. Any distinction whether size, level of development, environment, or degree of dependency is irrelevant to the discussion of human worth and value and nature.
- In addition, notice the presumed humanity of the baby by virtue of his response. He leaps. In vs. 44, this will be even clearer that the leap is associated with joy which is the response of a person, not an impersonal clump of cells.
- We'll come back to that later.
- But first take note of the word leaped. That's a relatively rare word that only occurs three times in the NT, all of them in Luke, two of them here in this passage. In the LXX, it occurs only a handful of times as well including one which might be alluded to here.
- Look at Genesis 25:22.
 - *The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. (Genesis 25:22)*
- That's a reference to Jacob and Esau in Rebekah's womb and the word translated struggled is actually the same in Greek as leaped in Luke.
- Again, there is a hint of the humanity of the unborn in Genesis, but also another subtle parallel. If you recall, the meaning of the struggle of the children in Genesis was ultimately tied to the fact that the older shall serve the younger. Think about how that

also points to the nature of the relationship between John and Jesus. Though John is 6 months older, he views himself in a subservient position to Christ. As Esau would serve Jacob, though technically slightly older, so John would serve Jesus though older.

- And so even in the womb, John is bearing witness to Jesus. He is in some small way acting out his role as the forerunner of Christ. This reminds me of what was said about the prophet Jeremiah in the first chapter of his book
 - *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.* (Jeremiah 1:5)
- Even when John is in the womb, he is already functioning to some degree to point to Jesus.
- You might then ask why, if John was so convinced of who Jesus is, why he would send word asking if Jesus was the one or not later in the gospels? The answer is that even prophets got confused and especially since Jesus was not exactly meeting all the various Christological expectations that had accumulated over the centuries at least not in the way that was assumed. In a very real sense Jesus wasn't the kind of Christ that John or the rest of Israel were expecting. That's part of the nature of progressive revelation. How exactly He would fulfill all of the various OT images was gradually revealed in His life, death, and resurrection.
- So John leaps and Elizabeth interprets that leap and sees Christological significance in that leap. It wasn't coincidental, it wasn't incidental, it was theologically significant.
- And we can trust her judgment given that Luke says that she was filled with the Spirit. This fits with a common Lukan emphasis throughout both Luke and the book of Acts. In fact, the book of Acts has been called alternatively the Acts of the Apostles or the Acts of the Holy Spirit because in reality, it's not an either/or, but a both/and. You should read it as a book about the Acts of the Spirit working through the Apostles.
- And particularly in this section of Luke, we've seen an emphasis on the Spirit.
- For instance, in verse 15, it was said of John the Baptist
 - *for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.* (Luke 1:15)
- Notice how this ties into what we are seeing in vs. 41. We have all these same elements of John the Baptist, the womb, and the Spirit.
- And in verse 35, Gabriel had told Mary that the Spirit would come upon her to conceive Christ.
- Then in 67 John's dad, Zechariah, was filled with the Spirit.
- So the centrality of the Spirit is being emphasized here. And the fact that Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit helps us to understand her utterances as an inspired interpretation of the movement of the unborn child.
- John the Baptist is filled with the spirit from the womb and Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit and what is the Spirit's role throughout the gospels? To bear witness to Jesus. To testify to His glory.
- How did Elizabeth know? You've heard of a gender reveal, but this is more than that. The Spirit reveals to her the significance of this child.

- And so, being filled with the Spirit, she begins to speak. Look at vs. 42.

and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (Luke 1:42)

- Raise your hand if you grew up Catholic.
- If so, you probably see a little hail Mary here in this passage. If you recall the first few lines:
 - Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
- The phrase full of grace comes from earlier in Luke 1 where Gabriel addresses her as o favored one or one who has been graced. The rest of the opening lines of the hail Mary come from this passage in Luke.
- This is one of those accretions whereby over the years a cult of Mariolatry has arisen in the Catholic Church. Though thankfully, the pope recently declared that Mary is no longer to be thought of as a co-mediator, there are still a number of problematic ideas that have attached to Mary over the centuries including her immaculate conception, her annunciation into heaven, and her perpetual virginity. We’ll see another hinted at later in the passage, but we’ll come back to that.
- Like a snowball that gathers snow as it rolls down a hill, so the understanding and veneration of Mary has snowballed over the centuries in the Catholic Church. We’ll talk about this quite a bit next year at our culture and theology on Roman Catholicism.
- Unfortunately, sometimes the Protestant response has been to swing the pendulum too far in the other direction.
- This reminds me of a friend I once had who would always take the contrarian position on anything popular. For instance, rather than just say, I don’t like the Beatles or even the Beatles were kinda overrated, he would say something like, the Beatles were the worst band ever which is just preposterous. Even Creed and Nickleback aren’t the worst ever. Or if he didn’t like a book, it was the worst ever. Everything was either everything or nothing. The best or the worst. He didn’t do nuance.
- And that’s unfortunately how some Protestants treat Mary. We hear the Catholic veneration and we swing the pendulum far too far in the other direction.
- What we see in this passage is that she is afforded honor, there is a blessing that is attached to bearing the Savior. That honor doesn’t rise to veneration or worship as is sometimes found in Catholicism, but that doesn’t mean that we completely remove all honor. The fact that Catholics make too much of her doesn’t mean that we should make too little!
- So let’s see what Elizabeth’s cry does and doesn’t entail.
- She says blessed are you among women.
- And Catholics say that means she is blessed beyond all other women, but that’s not exactly what the passage is saying. In fact, we see this phrase in other places referred to other women. It functions almost proverbially for significant women in Israel’s history. For example, in Judges 5, we read this:

- *Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. (Judges 5:24)*
- If you recall from Judges, Jael had just nailed Sisera to the floor, literally. So God used her to deliver the people of Israel from oppression.
- Then, in the apocryphal book of Judith, it says this:
 - “Then Uzziah said to her, “O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies.” (Judith 13:18)
- Again, Judith is functioning as a deliverer who strikes the head of the enemies.
- So, now Mary is also bearing one who would deliver Israel by cutting off the head of the serpent.
- So, is Mary blessed? Absolutely. She is special, she is chosen, she is a distinct vessel of God’s deliverance.
- But don’t take this too far. In fact, when Jesus has a chance to emphasize the extent of His mother’s blessedness, He actually directs the attention away from her. Look at Luke 11:
 - *As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27–28)*
- Again, is Jesus saying, my mom is worthless? She’s the worst. There’s nothing special about her at all. Of course not. She is blessed. She is special. But He IS warning us against undue elevation and emphasis.
- Status in the kingdom is not based on birthright or genealogy or progeny, its instead based on hearing and keeping the word. If anything, that might be what we should most admire in Mary, the fact that she believed. We’ll see that emphasized shortly.
- Let’s look at 43-44.

And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. (Luke 1:43–44)

- Questions play a significant role in the opening of Luke’s gospel. For instance, Elizabeth’s husband, Zechariah asked a question of Gabriel and was struck mute as a result.
 - *And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time. (Luke 1:20)*
- On the other hand, Mary asks a question a few verses later and there is no judgment, but only explanation. Why? Because her question was one of clarification and not disbelief.
- That fits with what we see elsewhere in Scripture. For instance in Romans 9, Paul writes,

- *You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” (Romans 9:19–20)*
- Or in the book of Job where he puts God in the dock and questions him and God’s response is to rebuke Job by means of putting him on the defensive.
- My point is that not all questions are the same. A child screaming why after you tell them to take out the trash is much different from a child that takes out the trash and then humbly asks why they had to take it today since they did so yesterday. Some questions are accusatory some are inquisitory. Some are presumptuous, some are curious.
- This reminds me of Voddie Baucham’s response when someone asked him, if God’s so powerful and so good, how come bad stuff happens. Voddie’s response was I’m not going to answer that until you ask it correctly. Which would obviously offend the questioner, but Voddie would eventually say, the right question is how on earth can a holy and righteous God know what I did and thought and said yesterday and not kill me in my sleep. That’s the right question, that’s the question of a humble heart.
- Some questions imply pride while others imply humility. Elizabeth’s is an example of the latter.
- How or why does she get the privilege of hosting the mother of our Lord.
- If you’ve been paying attention to pastor Ed’s sermon series on the deity of Christ over the past two years, you’re familiar with the fact that the word Lord or kurios in Greek is pregnant with theological significance. The term can just mean master, but since it was the term that is often used to translate the divine name, YHWH, Lord often means God.
- We don’t know exactly which Elizabeth meant. This may be one of those cases where she speaks better than she knows.
- But in hindsight we know that Jesus’ lordship isn’t just an honorific title. When we say Jesus is Lord, we mean Jesus is God.
- And that leads to another Roman Catholic accretion. Once again, we need to remove the centuries of build up without stripping the original paint.
- In addition to the immaculate conception and annunciation and perpetual virginity of Mary, the fourth Marian dogma is that she is the mother of God, in Greek theotokos.
- Surprisingly, this is actually something that Protestants and Catholics can kinda agree on. Should we use the term mother of God for Mary? I think its probably too confusing because of the centuries of RC misuse, but we should at least agree with the original meaning of the term.
- Calling Mary the mother of God actually comes from an early Christological debate over something called Nestorianism which teaches that Jesus was not just 2 natures in 1 person, but that He was 2 persons. And according to this, Mary was the mother of the human person only. Now, we did an entire TEC on Christological heresies and why this is important so you can go back to that if you want more, but suffice to say that the title theotokos came out of that debate.

- In fact, theotokos became a shibboleth for orthodoxy. It was basically a way for Christians to confess that they agreed that the person who was in the womb of the virgin Mary was indeed God, not merely a human who later became God in some sense.
- So, if that is what someone means when they say Mary is the mother of God, then we should unashamedly agree. But since most people don't know all of that background and since there is a huge potential for misunderstanding, I think it is generally best to avoid the term.
- Back to Elizabeth and Luke 1. Its obvious that she does not think that Jesus is just an average Joe. She doesn't take this visit as an everyday insignificant matter. She knows this is special, she knows he is special, but just how special? That she probably doesn't grasp at this point. In fact, even the disciples don't grasp this after 3 years of ministry with Jesus. And when he is resurrected, they're still confused.
- But she knows there is something happening. And she infers that by the Spirit as she reflects upon the significance of her own child leaping in her womb. And not just leaping, but leaping for joy.
- This too is significant because joy is another theme connecting the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus.
- When Gabriel tells of the birth of John he says,
 - *And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth...* (Luke 1:14)
- And when the angel appears to shepherds in the field, he says,
 - *...Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* (Luke 2:10)
- And later Jesus will say in a series of beatitudes or blessings in chapter 6
 - *Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven...* (Luke 6:23)
- So this joy of the baby John the Baptist functions yet again as a sign of his ministry to point to the joy found in the one to whom He points. John's joy is a signpost pointing to the source of our own. John's joy like John's baptism is transient and temporal, but Christ's is eternal.
- Let's keep going. Last vs. 45.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:45)

- We mentioned before the contrast between Zechariah's response and Mary's response.
- Zechariah is disciplined by means of being unable to speak because of his unbelief whereas Mary is commended for her faith.
- Looking at her response in verse 38 we read:
 - *And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.* (Luke 1:38)

- That's immediately before today's passage picks up so the very next verse says that she goes to visit Elizabeth. As we mentioned earlier, there is this emphasis on her faith and obedience.
- And this passage holds up that faith and obedience as something to emulate.
- Yes, Mary is not someone to venerate, but she is an example of what faith in action looks like. Of what it means to trust the Lord in spite of all the potential obstacles. Bearing a child as a virgin isn't just implausible or unlikely, its impossible.
- But she believes the angelic words of verse 37
 - *For nothing will be impossible with God.* (Luke 1:37)
- She believes that the word would be fulfilled. That word, fulfilled, by the way is from the same root as what is translated tetelestai, it is finished on the cross and the word perfection in Hebrews. It means that she believes it will be accomplished. This mirrors what Jesus will later say that the Scripture must be fulfilled.
- As we've talked about quite a bit in Hebrews, that's the nature of God's promises.
- When we make promises, they can fail to pan out for multiple reasons.
- First, we could be lying. Well, we know that not only does God NOT lie, but Scripture says God CANNOT lie. It is impossible for God to lie. Indeed, God is the very definition of truth. So His promises can never falter on the basis of a character default.
- But there is another reason our promises might fall short and that relates to our limitations, our finiteness. I might have every intention of fulfilling a promise and yet a single car accident or phone call or diagnosis can render my promise void. But once again, God is not subject to that problem. He is infinite and omnipotent, sovereign.
- So God's promises never fail. The question is, do we believe them? And that belief is measured biblically by means of action. Trust isn't just cognitive assent, but it is also active movement. Mary believes the word spoken to her and she gets up and leaves the comforts and conveniences of her home. And likewise Joseph believes the word and agrees to marry a woman though her pregnancy is suspect and seemingly scandalous.
- So, what should we believe in response to this passage? Well, I want to suggest one theme in particular. Earlier we talked about how the word Lord often means God so mother of my Lord could be an implicit evidence for the deity of Christ.
- Not all scholars agree that that is Elizabeth's or even Luke's intent, but I want to suggest that there is something deeper below the surface. Something I had never seen until I was studying this passage this week and that is a relationship between this passage and 2 Samuel 6.
- I don't expect you to have 2 Samuel memorized, but you're probably familiar with the story once I start telling it. It involves the ark of the covenant.
- Long before Indiana Jones found the ark and the U.S. placed it in a secret storage facility, Joshua placed it in Shiloh where it stayed for a couple of centuries until the Israelites were losing a battle with the Philistines so they decided to entice YHWH to fight on their side by bringing the ark to the front lines. Obviously God cannot be manipulated like that so He allows the ark to be captured. That said, His wrath burned against the Philistines so they eventually had enough of the plagues and sent it back to Israel. That all occurs in 1 Samuel.

- Then in 2 Samuel, when David arises as king, he goes to retrieve the ark, but a man named Uzzah touches the ark and is struck dead. And this begins a series of parallels between what we read in Luke 1 and what we read in 2 Samuel.
- For instance, look at 2 Samuel 6:9
 - *And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, “How can the ark of the LORD come to me?”* (2 Samuel 6:9)
- This bears at least some similarity to Elizabeth’s question in Luke 1:43
 - *And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:43)
- This is even clearer in the Greek where the word translated why can also be translated as how which mirrors what David asks. That in & of itself doesn’t suggest a parallel, but there’s more.
- Next, look at 2 Samuel 6:11
 - *And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.* (2 Samuel 6:11)
- Notice the amount of time that is referenced. Now check out Luke 1:56
 - *And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.* (Luke 1:56)
- Again, that could be a coincidence, but let’s keep going.
- When you read 2 Samuel, you’ll notice multiple uses of the word blessed and the same word is emphasized in Luke as we’ve seen. Blessed are you among women, blessed is the fruit of your womb.
- But wait, there’s more.
- Look at 1:42
 - *and she exclaimed with a loud cry...* (Luke 1:42)
- That particular Greek word translated exclaimed is a hapax legomenon in the NT which means that it only occurs once. That said, it occurs 5 times in the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT. In every single instance, that verb is used of people’s exultant response to the ark of the covenant. Literally, every single use of the verb in the LXX occurs in connection with the ark.
- In addition to all of this, these stories are both taking place in the hill country of Judah.
- Taken all together, I think this is a pretty strong case that there is an allusion or analogy between the two stories. Some Roman Catholics take it too far in suggesting that Mary is the new ark of the covenant, but there is at least a sense in which that is accurate. She is after all the vessel in which resides the very presence of God.
- But the proper response is not to worship the vessel, but the one who dwells within the vessel.
- Within the ark of the covenant were three items. We read about that in Hebrews 9:4 which says:
 - *having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.* (Hebrews 9:4)

- And notice how those three items parallel the person of Jesus Christ.
- According to John 6, He is the true manna, the true bread of God. He is even born in Bethlehem, Hebrew for house of bread.
- And He offers a new law and new covenant. We've been talking about that quite a bit in Hebrews and we'll explore it in depth next year. Whereas the ark of the covenant bore the word of God inscripturated, He is the word of God incarnate.
- And as the ark contained the rod of Aaron, the first high priest, so Christ represents a new priesthood that replaces Aaron, a perpetual priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.
- Again, I'm not sure how much of this Luke intended, but I think its clear that the Spirit intended at least some sort of parallel here so that we might see echoes and hints and whispers.
- As Augustine said, "the Old Testament is the New concealed, but the New Testament is the Old revealed."
- In 2026, as we get back into Hebrews, we'll think quite a bit about the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat and the propitiatory sacrifices, but for today, I want us to consider the implications of Christ as the fulfillment of the ark typology, He is the one in whom the presence of God fully and finally dwells.
- And as we draw that analogy let's notice one stark contrast. In 2 Samuel 6, Uzzah is struck dead for daring to touch the ark, though his motivations seem to be well-intentioned. After all, the ark seemed to be falling. But he's immediately executed for his presumption.
- As we talked about a few weeks back the Old Covenant and the temple and the ark and the holy of holies all symbolized the holiness and transcendence of God. It was all designed to communicate the distance between God and man, the division and separation, by various court and curtains and elaborate procedures.
- But in the New and in Christ we see His immanence. As we've seen over the past few weeks of Hebrews, we've seen an invitation to come, to see, to taste and touch.
- This is what it means that the word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is what it means when we say Immanuel, God with us.
- The curtain is torn down, the ark is opened, the dwelling place of God is with man.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- Earlier we talked about Christ as the new manna.
- *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* (John 6:32–33)
- A little later He says:
- *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.* (John 6:51)

- *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (John 6:53)*
- Since we've talked a lot about some RC accretions this morning, I want to mention one more and that is their view of communion which is called transubstantiation.
- They believe that when this bread and wine are blessed, they literally become the physical body and blood of Christ. They may still look and feel and taste like bread and wine, but they are substantially changed into the literal physical body and blood.
- And once again, we need to be careful that we don't react to that error by overcorrection.
- The fact that Christ is not physically present doesn't mean that He isn't present. Rather, Christ is present with this meal, but spiritually rather than physically.
- And that means that this meal functions as a means of grace. It doesn't increase our justification like RC believe, but it does help us progress in our sanctification. It does function to help strengthen our faith, to increase our joy, to nourish our souls.
- So as we partake this morning, I want to encourage you to do so with expectation, with anticipation, with confidence that this meal is working in you, that God is working in you through this meal to confirm His promises.
- Take a second and pray, confess, repent...and we'll partake together shortly...
- On the night...
-