

Lent Midweek 6 – The Feast of the Annunciation
Text: Luke 1:26-38
Theme: "Incarnation: The Highest Honor"

Throughout the ages, some have taught that the flesh is evil and the spirit is good. You can still see this teaching in Mormon teachings and Scientology. The idea is that we spend our lives trying to overcome the flesh. That's why Mormons teach that heaven is living as spirit beings not as physical beings on earth. In the Dark Ages, religious people would beat themselves and starve themselves as punishment for "fleshly" sins such as gluttony or lust.

But the reality is that God sees the human body as a glorious creation. Our lives in this flesh is his gift to us and each one of our bodies, no matter how corrupted by sin, is still a miracle. God never intended for us to be separated from our bodies. It was only because sin corrupted his creation that the body dies. Were it not for sin, our bodies would be healthy and perfect for eternity. Sadly, we caused death, not God. God rescues us from the death we brought upon ourselves.

But he considers the body such a glorious creation that he was willing to take one on. He was willing to quite literally put on human flesh. Why would the God of the universe choose to become flesh? He did so not only to redeem our souls but to redeem our bodies as well. Mary was astounded that this life in her womb was

there since she had not known a man but even more astounding was that this life was God himself. She would give birth to God and that was beyond her understanding. How could God become flesh? But nothing is impossible for God.

By the time Mary became pregnant with Jesus, human beings had been shedding blood on the altar to forgive sins for centuries. God had started the sacrificial system all the way back with Moses, but that blood was only pointing towards the blood of God himself. God knew that his physical blood would be shed on the cross and he would suffer Hell to redeem our souls and our bodies. That is how important our lives are to God.

As you know there is a political platform call pro-life which is against the termination of pregnancy and against euthanasia for the sick and the elderly. Obviously, we all understand the horrendous struggle a young woman faces when pregnant with an unwanted child and any of us who have had terminally sick loved ones knows the pain of watching them suffer. But asking whether one is pro-life has always struck me as an idiotic question. Of course we are pro-life. Isn't the opposite pro-death? To be pro-death would be to throw God's amazing gift back in his face and say, no thank you God. We are pro-life because God is pro-life. God loves life and therefore, so too do we. The value of

life, whether you are a fetus in the womb or a 106 year old, wheel chair bound invalid is found not in what you have done or what you are able to do but in what God has done for you and to you. When he became flesh, he began the process that would open the gates of paradise to all his children. One of our confirmation students said something very profound in a sermon report. He said,

“Sin changed the world and sin changed me.” Yes! Sin brought death and disease and poverty and all manner of hideous behavior. Sin is the reason we are faced with hideous life and death decisions. In this broken world, we are sometimes blinded by sin so that we don’t even see Godly options. Sin changed all of us but something happened to change us back. In 9 months we will celebrate the birth of Jesus, but the reason we celebrate the birth of Jesus is because of what we will celebrate in just 9 days, the death of Jesus and then the resurrection from death of Jesus. That is what changed us back.

He took on our broken, corrupted human life because it was that valuable to him. And he will resurrect our bodies because he did not create them just to rot away into nothingness. He created our bodies to be immortal along with our souls. We were never supposed to die. Sin changed us and now Christ has changed us back. Life is the most precious commodity that we have and

though our bodies will be separated from our souls for a time, they are as immortal as our souls. We will have our bodies back.

Our lives now are invested in this dying world to proclaim the value of life and the mystery of life that God has given. Our lives do not end. Because of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, we will be reunited with these same bodies on the last day. Of course, there will be no sin then, so there will be no illness, no disabilities and no sorrow.

On this day, the Feast of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel came to Mother Mary and told her that God was about to do something unimaginable. On this day, God proclaimed the highest honor on us that has ever been bestowed. He became flesh in Mary's womb, to take on human life, both body and soul to redeem both body and soul for all time.