TITLE: The Sign of all Signs!

TEXT: Mt. 12:38-39; Judg. 6:17; Ps. 86:17;

Is. 7:10-14; Mt. 1:18-23; Jn. 1:1-4,10,14

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever found yourself asking God for a sign? Usually it goes something like this: Lord, if you really want me to do this, give me a sign!

 Example: witness to someone or do something that you don't really want to do...We ask God for a sign... (God, I really don't want to look foolish here, but I will if I am sure that this is what you want me to do --give me a sign and I will do it)

 Jesus in rebuking Satan when tempted by Satan to seek a sign from God said: **It is written you shall not put the Lord your God to the test...**

 Jesus in speaking to the Pharisees---

**Matt 12:38 (NIV) Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."**

**39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.**

 So, are we wrong then when we ask God for a sign?No,Not at all!

 Gideon asked God for a sign,

**Judg 6:17 (NIV) Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me.**

 And he did it, and not just once but twice, just to be doubly sure that what he was about to do was the will of God.

David asked God for a sign..

**Psal 86:17 (NIV) Give me a sign of your goodness,**

**that my enemies may see it and be put to shame,**

**for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**

God has even challenged men at times to ask Him for a sign.

 One such time was about 742 BC when Ahaz was king of Judah....

 Ahaz, a descendant of King David, was king of Judah and knew about God but didn't really know God as his forefather David had.

 Ahaz and Judah were about to be attacked by a couple neighboring kings and he was worried about the possibility of being overtaken. God speaks these words to King Ahaz ....

 **Isai 7:10 (NIV) Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,**

**11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."**

 God here challenges Ahaz to ask Him for a sign..

**Whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."** In other words--Any sign you want!

Ahaz's response....

 **12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."**

Granted, Jesus said that we should not put the Lord our God to the test but there is a big difference between what Jesus was saying and what Ahaz was saying here....

 You see, there are times when asking for a sign is OK if to reinforce and build upon the faith we have in God to confirm His will for a given situation..

 It is not OK to test the Lord as a substitute for faith!

Gideon had faith in God before he sought a sign from Him.

 David had a tremendous faith in God before he sought a sign from God.

 Their seeking God for a sign wasn't in order so that they would have faith in God, their seeking a sign was simply to reinforce and build upon the faith that they already had.

 The Pharisees didn't have faith and wanted to see a miraculous sign so that they might come to believe and have faith.....

 To them Jesus said that it is only a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks a sign....

 Ahaz probably thought that he was being spiritual when he said that he wouldn't test the Lord by asking for a sign.... But the fact is it just shows how much of a relationship that Ahaz didn't have with God.

 The Prophet Isaiah recognizes this when he responds to Ahaz.....

**13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?**

 If Ahaz would have had an active, living faith in God, if he would have had the relationship with God that his forefather David had, he would have rejoiced at the invitation that God was extending to him.

 If God were to speak to you in the time of adversity and say: I will deliver you! Now just ask me for any sign that you want to confirm to you my faithfulness to you....Are you going to stand up in your piety and say to God---no that would be putting the Lord God to the test?

 It is almost like Ahaz thought that God was trying to trick him here or something..

 I don't know about you but if I am facing adversity, trial and tribulation in my life and God tells me to ask for any sign from Him that I want to so that He can build up my faith in Him and encourage me in His faithfulness, I am going to take Him up on His offer!

 Any sign I want God? WOW! Have a large Sausage-mushroom pizza, from Barnaby’s by in Chicago delivered hot to my door at exactly 7:23 PM tonight!

 You do that God you can do anything..

 It wasn't Ahaz's refusal to seek a sign when offered to do so that tried the patience of the Lord--It was the condition of Ahaz's heart. And his refusal to hear the voice of the Lord.

 **So Isaiah said, Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?**

**Isai 7:14 (NIV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

 Ahaz wouldn't accept a sign from God when He offered to give one to him so God gives a sign that would be a sign to all men of His faithfulness.

 God would not just give a sign but He would give a most miraculous sign that would be a sign for all people in all generations of His faithfulness and of His love for mankind..

**Isai 7:14 (NIV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

 **The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

The ultimate fulfillment of this we see in**:**

 **Matt 1:18 (NIV) This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.**

**19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

**20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.**

**21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."**

**22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:**

**23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"**

Folks, this is the sign of all signs! The miracle of all miracles!

 **The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

 Actually we see two signs here and two miracles...

The First..

 The **virgin** will be with Child!

 Virgin, from the Greek-

**3933 parthenos {par-then'-os}**

**1) a virgin**

**1b) a woman who has never had sexual intercourse with a man**

**2a) one who has never had intercourse with women**

Talk about a sovereign sign from God. Talk about a miracle….

 This is even bigger than getting a good pizza in Iowa!

Think about it? A truly miraculous conception!.

 Jesus was born in a way that no one has ever been or ever will be born again!

 This wasn't just something that was unusual or very rare---this was something that was totally impossible! Outside of the supernatural, and that is what a miracle is, this could not happen!

 God chose as a sign something that could not be imitated or duplicated by man.

 The virgin was with child!

 Not by the seed of man but by the seed of God.

 Which leads us to the second sign and second miracle that even is more magnificent than the first..

 **The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

 **Immanuel=**

A composite of the Hebrew: **0410 'el {ale}**

**AV - God 213, Immanuel + 06005 2, might 1, strong 1; 2451) god, god-like one, mighty one**

**1d) God, the one true God, Jehovah**

 Ale is a Hebrew word that appears 245 times in Scripture and is translated the One True GOD 213 of those times.

 Emmanuel literally means...

**06005 `Immanuw'el {im-maw-noo-ale'}**

**Immanuel = "God with us" or "with us**

**is God"**

 Immanuel is not a proper name it is a descriptive term! WITH US IS GOD!

 The proper name of the Christ Child was Jesus.

Jesus in Hebrew translates Joshua-- the Lord saves or the Lords salvation!

 That is the proper name of Christ..

 Immanuel, God with us, describes who Jesus is, what He is all about...

 Two Gospel writers, Matthew and Luke record the account of Jesus's birth.. It is from those two Gospel accounts that most of the Christmas narratives that we use this time of year come...

 Another Gospel writer, John, starts out his gospel, not with the earthly birth of Jesus, but with the true origin of Jesus.....

 **John 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**2 He was with God in the beginning.**

**3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**

**4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.**

**10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**

**14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

What a miracle! What a sign that God has given us!

 The babe that lie in a manger that star filled night in Bethlehem was not merely a baby born or miraculous birth! He was not merely an expression of God’s love to us! But the babe that lie in that manger was the same one that created the mountain ranges, that carved the caverns of the seas! That Spoke the world into existence! The very creator of everything that has ever been created!

 **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**

 **He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**

**The Word** (God, the creator Himself ) **became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Ponder the miracle….The creator, the all exalted one, lowering Himself to take on flesh and blood and become like one of us. The creator lowering Himself to the position of the created…

 What a miracle…

And the Miracle doesn't stop here---

 He goes on to live some 33 years among us here on Earth, not as royalty, but as a servant…

 Then He willingly and sacrificiously gives His life on a cross for your and my sins… This not being merely a good man, a righteous man that didn't sin---But God Himself!

 The Almighty God appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets.

 Nothing in fiction is so fantastic, so wonderful, so mind boggling as this truth of the Incarnation.

 **Isai 7:14 (NIV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.** **"With us is God!**"

 This is the sign of all signs!

 Signs have a specific purpose. Their purpose is to lead us in a certain direction to a specific destination.

 This sign that God has provided for us is no different.

 Its purpose is to lead us in the direction of His salvation, to lead us to Jesus so that we will get to a specific destination, the destination of Heaven....

 This sign, the sign of Jesus birth, is a sign that God has given to you and I this morning that confirms His love for us and that it is His will that none should perish but all would have opportunity to come to everlasting life in Him...

 This year as you look into the manger what is it that you see?

 Do you see, not just a cute little baby wrapped up in swaddling clothes, but do you see the sign of all signs? Do you see your Savior? Do you see the soon coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Do you see the way, the truth and thew life? The way for you to be forgiven of your sins and the way for you to enter eternal life?

Story entitled ----“Mary's Dream”

 I had a dream, Joseph.

I don't understand it, not really, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for God's son. I think that was what it was all about.

 The people had been preparing for it for about six weeks. They had decorated the house and bought new clothes. They'd gone shopping many times and bought elaborate gifts.

 It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our Son.

 They wrapped them in beautiful paper and tied them with lovely bows and stacked them under a tree -- yes, a tree, Joseph, right in their house!

 They'd decorated the tree also. The branches were full of glowing balls and sparkling ornaments. There was a figure on the top of the tree. It looked

like an angel might look.

 Oh, it was beautiful. Everyone was laughing and

happy. They were all excited about the gifts.

 They gave the gifts to each other, Joseph, not to our son... I don't think they even knew him--they

never mentioned His name.

 Doesn't it seem odd for people to go to all that

trouble to celebrate someone's birthday if they don't know him?

 I had the strangest feeling that if our son had gone to this celebration he would have been intruding. Everything was so beautiful, Joseph and everyone so full of cheer, but it made me want to cry. How sad for Jesus not to be wanted at his own birthday celebration.

 I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible, Joseph, if it had been real.

 (Author unknown)

A parting question this morning… If Jesus would show up at your Christmas celebration would He know instantly that the party was for Him or would He feel like an intruder?

 **Isai 9:6 (NIV) For to us a child is born,**

**to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called**

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,**

**Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**7 Of the increase of his government and peace**

**there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness**

**from that time on and forever.**

**The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.**

Prayer....