

Comparing Matthew and Luke Third Week of Advent Final Days of Advent
Monday, December 18, 2017 8:15 AM Jer 23:5-8; **Mt 1:18-25** (They are actually two stories, and they are not the same; they don't have the same feeling or the same perspective.)

We are reading today from Matthew's Gospel. **Matthew and Luke** are the only two evangelists that tell us anything about the infancy of Jesus. Unfortunately **we always mix the two together as if it's only one story, but they're actually two stories, and they are not the same; they don't have the same feeling or the same perspective.** Matthew is writing for Christian Jews. Luke is writing for Christian gentiles. That in itself is a big difference. **Luke loves to stress all the ways in which Jesus doesn't fit into society.** For example in the very beginning Mary and Joseph are living in Galilee, which is outside of Judea, outside of the inner circle of the people of God, as they understood it. Luke tells the story from Mary's point of view, again different from a Jewish approach. It is also Luke who is constantly bringing up difficult little ideas like the Good Samaritan. He ends the passion narrative with the Good Thief—all these difficult ideas trying to incorporate new ideas into a very established sense of right and wrong. Matthew not so much, **Matthew is more of a traditionalist.** But if you notice, according to Matthew, Mary and Joseph are living in Judea near Jerusalem. After the birth of Jesus the angel tells Joseph to take the child and his mother away to Egypt. On the way back the angel will warn him don't take the child home, rather go to Galilee, and thus Jesus became a Nazarene. **So it's a different approach.**

Today what I just read is the Annunciation from Matthew's viewpoint; it isn't to Mary. **The Angel Gabriel does not go to Mary in Matthew's Gospel; the angel comes to Joseph.** Mary is just pregnant and visibly so, but nothing about how that happened, or what she knew, or what she felt, no mention of her visiting Elizabeth or anything like that. The gospel begins with the genealogy that traces the line from Abraham to Joseph. **Now the angel appears to Joseph and**

says the woman you are betrothed to is pregnant with the power the Holy Spirit; you must take her as your wife into your home, and he does.

So Matthew's view is, as I say, from a different point from Luke. **As we listen to Matthew, it's important we listen to Matthew, and not confuse it with what Luke says.** The whole story of this little crèche, that's a blending of two things because we have the stable from Luke, and then we have the magi from Matthew, all mixed together in one place. Well that's not possible. **So we have to realize that actually we don't know much about the infancy of Jesus.** In fact all we know is that Jesus was an infant. He was conceived. He was born. He grew up. That's all we really know. **What Matthew tries to tell us is something from the standpoint of Jewish, Abrahamic theology and Davidic, the whole idea of the Davidic line, the messianic promises, the prophecies of Isaiah, and how Jesus fulfills them. That's his intention.**

Luke is much more interested in showing how God is doing something totally different from anything anyone has ever imagined, and let's watch. So I would say, in a way, you can have fun this week by comparing and reading differently these wonderful stories.