

4 Advent Year B

12/20/2020

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Canticle 3 & 15; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

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Last week we talked about one of the primary figures of Advent.

John the Baptist.

Focusing on his message we noted that he preached a call to be baptized.

A baptism of repentance.

To turn from doing things our way and to make a fresh start at living by God's commands.

He also foretold of the one to come...

Who would baptize his followers in the Holy Spirit.

And so, in our preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus...

The advent of our Savior...

We are to practice baptism and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And today we are going to look at another towering figure of Advent.

Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus.

And just as we are familiar with John the Baptist...

We are also familiar with Mary.

When we meet her in the scriptures, she is a young woman...

most believe she would be in her teens...

and she is...

what we would call in our day...

engaged to be married...

to a man named Joseph...

who was probably a lot older than Mary.

She lived in a small town called Nazareth...

In her day the population is believed to be about 400 people.

(interestingly the population of Nazareth today is above 77,000 people...
a good-sized town).

She came from a poor humble family...

Certainly not wealth.

And it was in the sixth month...

while Mary was going about her day...

When the angel Gabriel announced to her that she will give birth to a
son and name him Jesus.

And this is no ordinary son...

The angel Gabriel declared:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever;

his kingdom will never end.

Of course, this is our Savior... Jesus Christ our Lord.
The one who came and died and rose from the grave...
Making a way for us to be forgiven of our sins...
He ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to transform us,
heal us, and lead us in the truth of Holy Scripture.

And when Mary heard the news of the Angel Gabriel and of the birth of
Jesus...

She asked how she was going to give birth since she was a virgin.
The angel declared that it was a miracle of God by the Holy Spirit...
Because nothing is impossible with God.

And her response was this:

I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.

In her words and actions, she displayed what it means to be God fearing.

What it means to be a disciple, a believer...

She expressed it so beautifully...

with obedience and trust.

Because such is the posture that we should have...

As we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ...

To be obedient and to trust...

Mary trusted God even in the midst of what we can assume to be insults and conjectures of her pregnancy during her engagement.

Mary was obedient even in the midst of trial and fear.

She trusted the plan of God even when her whole world caved in around her.

And such should our posture be...

To trust in God even when the whole world seems to have gone mad.

To be obedient to God even when our culture... our society...

says we are wrong...

even to accuse us of being evil because we believe a certain way because of the Holy Scriptures.

Trust and obedience in the face of such pressure is not easy...

But it is what we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ.

And we have more of St. Mary's message too.

It comes to us in her song...

It is found in the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55...

just a few verses after our Gospel reading for today.

We heard the words in our Canticle...

It is known as the *Magnificat*...

the Song of Mary.

It is her expression...

Her response to what God was doing through her and her relative Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist.

She expresses the greatness of the Lord...

She rejoices...

Because of what God was doing.

And she has such a grasp of the gospel...

The good news...

And it expressed in her song so powerfully...

Listen to the words again:

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,

for he has remembered his promise of mercy...

It is a dynamic song...

And the good news is so profound...

God is lifting up those that have been cast down.

It mirrors the time when Jesus, after his 40 days in the wilderness, goes to his hometown...*to Nazareth... and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.*

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

The good news is not that the powerful become more powerful.

That those that who do evil become ever greater in this world.

That would not be good news.

Jesus came so that the broken, the poor, the lame, the blind (both physically and spiritually) would be healed...

It is good news to the least of these...

To the outcast...

The forgotten...

The marginalized...

The ones who have been pushed aside.

And as we hear the message of St. Mary today...

We should ask:

Who are the least of these... in our world?

And there are many!

The good news is to stand up for those without a voice.

And to use our voice, our influence, our money, our time...

to speak up and help those that need help.

And there are so many!

The list includes children that make their way through the foster care system.

The list includes the child in the womb who is discarded by abortion and fear.

The list includes people of color who have lived and continue to live under prejudice and unjust laws that continue to wreak havoc in only certain communities.

The list includes refugees, the elderly, the poor, and those whose lives have been torn apart by war and environmental disasters.

The good news of the gospel...

the message of Mary in her song...

Is that the God of the universe...

the Creator of the World...

Hears the cries of his people...

He is the God of mercy and is doing something about the ones who have been cast out and forgotten.

Where is God in this world?

God came to earth... incarnate... Jesus Christ...

He came to set us free and give us a hope and a future.

He came to transform this world...

He came to die so that we may receive the forgiveness of our sins.

And when we repent and receive the grace of God...

by the power of the Holy Spirit...

we are given a new hope... a living hope.

The hope that Jesus will come again and make all things new...

Make all things right.

And as we wait...

As we prepare for the coming of Jesus...

The advent of our Lord...

We work to transform the here and now...

To get things ready for the return of the king...

We don't settle for the same old same old...

But we prepare for the advent of our Lord.

St. Mary's message is a call to prepare.

A call to be obedient and to trust in God's plan.

A call to proclaim the good news to the lowly, the hungry, and the poor.

God is on the move through his people.

That's you and I...

We are preparing the way of the Lord.

Making his paths straight...

Making a highway for his coming...

And when he comes...

And on that day of justice...

When he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world...

May we without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

(BCP, 378)

Because we like Mary... proclaim the greatness of the Lord.

Because we like Mary... rejoice in God who is our savior.

And through this young, engaged teenager...

The hope of the world was born.

And he changed the world forever...
And we carry that message in this world...
Even to the least of these...

On this final Sunday of Advent...
As we wait and prepare for Jesus...
Our prayer continues to be...
Come Lord Jesus, come.
And we put our hand to the plow...
And work in preparation...
For the coming our Lord.
Amen.