

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Year B

42nd Sunday of Pandemic

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Second Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:46b-55

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

12/20/2020

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

26In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37For nothing will be

impossible with God.” 38Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

Greetings, Favored One!

Good morning! Have you been watching season 2 of Disney’s wonderful show The Mandalorian? It’s the one with baby Yoda, who has stolen the hearts of millions of viewers, mine included! I won’t give anything away, but a few episodes ago we watched the Mandalorian and another character named Mayfield pretending to be imperial soldiers as they were attempting to gather important information from a computer. They were on a planet that was being mined of its resources, a situation that was out of the control of the locals. Mayfield comments that it doesn’t matter who is in charge, that for the weaker it wouldn’t matter, would anything really change?

While a little more pessimistic than what I would like, I believe that Mayfield captures a point that Mary would agree with too. The powers that be will always be moving, and so it falls to us to keep on moving with our lives. In The Mandalorian it’s the Empire and the Republic, for Mary, it was the story of God, or gods, who were at work.

Over the past several weeks we have been hearing about the story of John the Baptist, of the one preparing the way for the Lord. But this week we finally turn to Mary and the upcoming birth of Jesus. Which always surprised me, because Mary would have started her pregnancy a whole nine

months ago, roughly the same time this quarantine started for us. In fact, the message in our Gospel lesson for today, the Annunciation, is celebrated on March 25, when it would have been delivered. But we put the story here in Advent.

It's a story that we need to hear, especially at a time when everything feels out of our control, because it probably felt the same for Mary. As one scholar points out; *"Mary was greatly troubled. Tobit, a popular folk tale included in the apocrypha, tells of a jealous angel who appeared on a bride's wedding night each time she married and killed her bridegroom. Against the background of this popular story, the fear of a betrothed girl at the appearance of an angel is all the more understandable."*¹ So, besides the usual shock of an angel appearing, this 12 year old girl may have called into question the motives of Gabriel. There are reasons that whenever an angel appears in the Bible they say something like "do not be afraid." Because they were literal messengers of God! And they didn't look like what we think of when we say angels. Forget the chubby little cherubs or serene faces. Angels had six sets of wings, and looked absolutely insane. Heck, I'm surprised when I see a random bug inside my house; I can't imagine what it's like to set eyes on an honest-to-goodness angel.

And Gabriel hasn't even dropped the big news yet, "Hey Mary! Don't freak out! I've got good news! You're going to give birth to the son of God! How? It's a miracle!" And then the most surprising thing of all happens... Mary responds simply with: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Wow... As we noted in our Bible study Monday, compare this story with that of Jonah who runs away, complains, and throws a fit the whole time. Mary responds in trust and faith. It's as if

¹Keck, Leander E. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary Volume 8*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2015. p. 39.

she says “This is the card that I’ve been dealt, the only thing that I can control is how I respond.”

I doubt that I am the only one who thinks that right now things are out of my control. It feels like everywhere I look I am being overwhelmed with some sort of crazy new situation. We sit and wonder “why me?” Things that Mary probably wondered too. But the Mother of God, a poor girl in the Middle East, teaches us today that sometimes the best thing to do is just keep going on with your life. The concerns of tomorrow are for tomorrow, in the meantime, think of good! God has blessed us with something amazing! For Mary it was the child in her womb, for us, it is the message in our hearts. All we can do is choose how we share that great news. Why? Well as my favorite bounty hunter says, “This is the Way.” Amen.