



The World Is about to Turn

Luke 1:39–55

*Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the child you will bear!*

December 20, 2015

Thought for the Fourth Week of Advent

Scriptures: Micah: 5: 1-4, Hebrews 10: 5-10,
Luke 1: 39-45

I would be willing to bet that if you were to ask any minister how they feel about preaching during the Sundays of Advent, they will tell you that it's a battle, it's always been a battle, at least in these modern times when the commercialization of Christmas has caught the eye of Christians and non-Christians alike. That set the Season of Advent on the back burner.

But let me tell you, this beautiful season of Advent which has its own meaning and its own identity aside from Christmas, often gets lost in stories of Santa Claus, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman.

I don't want to be labeled a Christmas grouch; it's just a fact of the intersection or close association of two seasons. Because of its material attractiveness, the anticipation of Christmas shopping simply drowns out the Advent beauty, the rich color of violet, the longing sounds of the Advent Message, "Come Lord Jesus Come. The Christmas decoration of the malls, of course, began long before Thanksgiving whereas the beautiful season of Advent creeps up quietly upon us at the First Sunday. From that moment forward until Christmas Day, we stay quiet, letting this special time have its proper place.

But that's okay, it's okay, we're not going to do battle with those who are simply trying to celebrate the birth of Christ in their own particular manner. It's just that the Christian faith that lies in the heart of Advent does not seem as interesting as the effort to find a good bargain on a flat screen television. OK, so much for this griping. I've gotten it all out of my system.

So then, the question: what can you find in this Fourth Sunday of Advent, only a few days before Christmas, that will help us redeem the heart of the Advent season?

Well, first of all, for all who try to find spiritual meaning in the scriptures of this season there is plenty to reflect on simply because Advent itself is a shortened symbol of the waiting we humans have been doing, ever since the great prophets of Israel began to speak of The One who is to come, the Redeemer of all humankind, the great Christ event. Micah, the prophet, for instance, speaks of Bethlehem, David's birthplace, from whence shall come a shepherd who will bring that peace for which we have waited so long, peace for a fractured world and healing for wounded sinners.

The gospel also speaks so clearly of waiting, the brief waiting that Mary and Elizabeth did as they prepared for the eventual coming of Jesus and John the Baptist. It is the symbol of the kind of waiting that we all do as we search for signs that the Lord's coming is closer than we first thought possible.

The whole meaning of this season, therefore, is a lesson in waiting, not for death, not for the end of the world, but rather for the coming of the Christ into our lives, our families, our neighborhoods. In some sense this is a waiting that has no end, at least none that we know of at this moment. We do realize, however, that all human existence is a kind of in-between-time, life from the mysterious beginning of all human existence until each of us individually comes to the point of the eternal vision of

God's presence.

So, the question comes: What shall we do in-the-between-times, while waiting. Consider this: Life itself is not simply a period of hesitancy, waiting for something to happen over which we have no control. The waiting of the Christian is one that is filled with opportunities to make Christ present, not at the end of time, but rather here and now in this moment of history, the history of our lives.

Given all that, let's not do battle with those who have never heard of Advent's waiting. Let's rather live in such a way that people may be a bit astonished that we are not seen as people rushing around until just before Christmas eve. Rather, let this be a quiet, contemplative time, for us, a moment during the year when we give God, God's time to become present to us in the Son who comes from Bethlehem, not yet, but sometime. In the meantime we say, "Come Lord Jesus, come." All creation waits for the moment of final fulfillment that, for now, is only a dream, but will be reality...sometime.

May God bless all you do this week.

Prayer for Peace - Malawi



God of love, you are the way of peace. We give thanks for an awareness of your presence in moments of true joy and your comforting Spirit in moments of great challenge.

Come into the brokenness of our lives with your forgiving and healing spirit. Restore us to right relations with you, with others and with your world.

We uphold for your blessing the nation and people of Malawi. Touch the hearts of all who are suffering from poverty and HIV and AIDS. Deepen your compassion in

our hearts that we might be instruments of your love for people struggling with such injustices in our own communities, as well as throughout the world.

Help us live in solidarity with those who suffer from poverty, hunger, abuse, discrimination and violation of rights. May we respond to your unconditional grace with compassion and generosity so we can build a better world for all.

We pray this in the spirit of peace, and in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

*For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears,
the babe in my womb leaped for joy." (Luke 1:44)*

When you hear the scripture readings each Sunday,
do you "leap for joy?"

If not, don't blame the Presider or the Speaker,
rather look inside yourself.

Do you prepare for church each week
or do you just show up and expect to be entertained?