



His Name Is Jesus

Fourth Sunday of Advent – Peace

Luke 1:26–38

*“Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.
You will conceive and give birth to a son,
and you are to call him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.*

December 21, 2014

Thought For The Week

Scriptures:

Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11 • Thessalonians 5: 16-24 • John 1:6-8, 19-28

I'm sure that most regular attendees at church have noticed that we are in the midst of the Advent season. Our minds, during this season, usually return to the theme of waiting. We are entering into the last week of the season, the fourth Sunday, in fact. So, it might be interesting to explore why this notion of waiting predominates peoples thinking. There are two reasons: *First*, the dominant reading is almost always taken from the Prophet Isaiah who spoke to the exiled Israelites in Mesopotamia where they had been isolated for over 80 years. Some simply decided to stay because living was good; others, the more conservative number, continued to hope for release, which eventually did come, through the help of Cyrus, the king of Persia. It was to these people who longed to go home that Isaiah spoke. So, if you need to find a foundation for the notion of waiting, Isaiah the prophet is the most reliable source.

However, if we wish to explore the more philosophical side of waiting, all we need do is reflect on life in our modern world as we experience it. It is obvious that we do more waiting than we do anything else in our every day existence. Think of an ordinary day and think of all the times you simply could not fulfill some task you planned to do because you were not able to control the circumstances within which you lived. Waiting for the family to get ready for church, waiting for the car pool to go to work; waiting for your son or daughter to come home from a date; waiting for that promised raise or transfer or better yet a promotion. These circumstances go on and on and if we are reasonable people we simply get used to it and admit that this is part of life as we know it.

The people who are affected by the unfinished business of life of course are those who are poor, those who have little control over their existence, those who may be incarcerated, those simply who are dependent upon others to release them from this condition of life.

Isaiah the prophet, in fact, does list some of the unfortunate ones. He proclaims that God has sent him “to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.”

In the gospel we hear the famous John The Baptist preaching the same message: “I am he voice of one crying out in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord.”

The point that both writers stress is that waiting is not necessarily an impossible condition of life. They both assume that while we wait, we can do something about the abusive conditions that may surround us. In other words, there are some conditions that are simply part of the unfinished business of life; but on the other hand, there are certain situations wherein we can lessen the suffering that accompanies waiting. In short, we do have some control over our life.

Sadly enough, however, the conditions described by Isaiah and John the Baptist never seem to change. So many people in the world today seem to suffer the same inhumanities: think for instance of the conditions in the Middle East, the very same land Isaiah and John spoke of centuries ago. Once again, millions of people are displaced, robbed of their home and land, destined to live in ways no one deserves to live. When we compare our plight to theirs, then our waiting at the gas pump and

in line at the market doesn't seem so important.

Granted, of course, that the conditions we speak of here are worldwide and that we are limited in our capacity to make any long-term changes. Nevertheless, we can at least learn from such situations: we can decide to stop moaning and groaning over the small irritable situations that inconvenience us. We can learn that waiting is simply part of the human condition. In other words, get used to it; make something good come out of it.

So, while I think of it, perhaps our Christian season of Advent is not simply a time of waiting for the Christ child, but rather a time to learn that Christ himself, during his own life, did not have the power to change all the things that disturbed him.

So, Christ continues to wait and so do we. Ultimately, it's what we try to do with our waiting that really counts.

Happy Birthday Laura (12/27)

Prayer For The Week

Loving God, we thank you for blessing our lives. We thank you for your compassion and the reassuring comfort of the Holy Spirit. We thank you for how Jesus teaches us to pursue justice and peace.

Gracious God, we give thanks for the guidance, the love, that you provide and show us, even amid our darkest moments, even as we fall short of the ideal we strive for.

Loving Creator, we thank you for all life. We acknowledge your sacred creation and ask your blessing of hope and joy be given to each one whom you know so well. We ask your peace and comforting spirit be upon the people of Benin. Guide them as they pursue courses of action that will expand their understanding of justice and equitable living.

God of compassion, be with us as we strive to share your love with others. Help us endure the struggles and strife of this world, and help us realize our call to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, in whose precious name we pray, amen.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

Vision - Our vision is of a world in which the abundance of food that God has provided is fairly and justly distributed, all are fed, and there is peace in all the earth.

Mission - Sharing our abundance, we seek to make a difference in a world where far too many are poor and hungry. Our three-fold mission is to support a program of ministries to hungry people throughout the world by funding agencies and projects seeking to provide relief and release, to educate about hunger-related issues, and to encourage individual church members to advocate with governmental representatives on behalf of the hungry.

History - The World Hunger Fund was established by a World Conference resolution (GCR 1148) in 1978. It provides for a program to be established to "facilitate opportunities for those interested and motivated to participate in additional ways beyond the fasting discipline and to add these funds to the support of ministries directed toward problems of world hunger."

In 1979 the First Presidency established the World Hunger Fund. Its purpose is to provide funds to alleviate hunger, to educate persons about hunger issues, and advocate on behalf of the hungry. A team was appointed to review funding requests.

The church has been collecting and distributing World Hunger contributions since 1980. Our efforts have been blessed. Millions of dollars have been received and distributed to benefit many worthy projects around the world.

As additional resources are gathered, the World Hunger Team will continue in its task of reviewing projects and funding proposals. It is also our prayer that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will continue to inspire generous support.