

Advent #4

12/20/2020

J.V. Trautwein

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Announcements: Christmas Eve

- 5:00 PM The online Christmas Eve Service will be sent by email.
- 7:00-10:00 PM The decorated church sanctuary will be open for personal Christmas meditation.
- The Nativity village will be open also in addition to Sundays from 1:00-4:00 PM (Covid practices are in effect.)

Celebrate (Introduction)

“God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David’s throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel’s greeting and buy the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, ‘Count me in.’ We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, ‘Count us in.’”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding”](#)

Psalmody: Luke 1:46-55

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵² he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Prepare the Royal Highway”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With you abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 16:25-27](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 1:26-38](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”](#)

The Angel Tree , Advent Wreath, and The Message ([Video Link](#))

Throughout life I have been asked to do many different things. For so many reasons, some have been things which I really didn't want to do. I have found that to turn down a request can be a difficult thing to do but yet to do so can be the right thing and even be very self-fulfilling. In living in Fell's Point during a time when there were many divisive and important issues I can remember being asked to do TV and newspaper interviews from time to time. At first I was very obliging but eventually I saw how my words were used to serve a purpose. I can vividly recall a telephone call from a local TV station in which they wanted to interview me only if I would take an opposing opinion to what I believed. That was an easy answer and I hung up the phone.

Then there were times when I was asked to do things which actually changed my life like when I was asked to be a town crier to promote a historic parade. Most of you know what happened thereafter. Then there are those requests which if answered in the affirmative required much time, sacrifice, and life changing consequences. Our answer may just be determined by the reason behind the request. When it is for the betterment, welfare, health, or safety of ourselves, or that of others, then the request is answered out of the love that we have. To deny the request is to deny love itself. This is not only in regards to the life threatening dangers of the pandemic but also in answering the economic needs of those suffering for want of life sustaining provisions. Therefore, our answer may very well be that we need to sacrifice out of our love so that others may live.

In a very real sense the more demanding the task we are asked to do, the more likely the door will be opened to greater achievements. We see this throughout history when the circumstances of the times demand someone to stand up and answer the call to bring changes for the welfare of others and even the world .We have seen this with great leaders who ended up sacrificing their life's dreams or in some cases even their lives in fulfilling the call. Some of

these are noted in our history books but many are virtually unknown who suffer and even die needlessly from warfare, prejudice, racial, and religious bigotry. The unknown are innocent victims of just answering the call to live out their lives in peace, justice, and equality.

In many instances in life we are not asked to do something by somebody but the decision is already made for us by the situation or circumstances in which we find ourselves. In fact, it is like being chosen. Therefore, the decision is already been made and thrust upon us. We can either willingly accept it or try to deny or fight it. No matter our choice the reality is that we have to live through it. This is the case in which we find ourselves today with this spreading deadly virus. We either accept its reality and do everything we can to overcome it, or we try to ignore its presence and live with its consequences.

Today's Gospel lesson is the beautiful story of Mary being confronted by the angel Gabriel. In this, Luke's account of the annunciation, the angel Gabriel entered a young woman's life with a totally unexpected pronouncement of a decision which had already been made for her. There was no asking Mary, "would you?" This pronouncement could have involved major sacrifices and very well have placed this young woman's life in danger of being determined to be in violation of adultery. On the other hand if the angel was correct it would place this very ordinary young woman in a situation of historic proportions.

Like many young women of her age, Mary was engaged or betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter. But at that moment she was the center of God's attention. The angel Gabriel, God's special messenger, appeared before Mary with the most unusually important message and proclamation delivered to anyone. Mary had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Son of God. The angel proclaimed. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He 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."

One can just imagine Mary's initial reaction. She must have thought she had fallen asleep and this was all a dream. It was all so unreal and even extremely confusing. After all she knew she had not any such relationship with a man. Therefore, in her confusing state of mind she asked the angel, "How can this be since I am still a virgin?" She needed clarification as to the feasibility of it all. The truth and reality of this message were beyond any natural or logical explanation. It was then Gabriel assured Mary this was not just a dream and the message was real with these words, "The Holy Spirit shall 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 the son of God."

Think about it. What a confusing and overwhelming message this was for a young woman to handle. She would be God's very special instrument for the Incarnation. Such an honor and such a responsibility was placed upon her. "Why was I chosen? Why not someone else? I was given no choice in the matter? I don't know if I am ready for something like this. Is this all

possible?" One can imagine all the doubts and questions going through this young woman's mind. It was then Gabriel reminded Mary, "For nothing will be impossible with God."

It was then that she came to understand. Her faith took over and she felt the joy of being God's chosen one to give life to God's message of "Good News" which was to come. At that moment she accepted the life which God had chosen for her. "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." With this she submitted herself to be God's chosen person and accepted the responsibility of motherhood to the very Son of God.

From Abraham down through the ages to Mary, God's chosen people were placed into situations which were not of their own choice or making. They were in situations which went beyond the ability to say yes or no but demanded a response of acceptance. With each acceptance God gave the strength and perseverance to answer the call. For each the new life presented new challenges and a new commitment. In each instance there came an inner assurance and inner peace which never ceased. Mary epitomized this. By the end of the angel's visit one can almost feel the inner chaos in Mary's mind changing to an inner peace. It was then she was able to say "Here am I a servant of the Lord." It was then she was able to say,

"My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

On this the fourth Sunday in Advent, we look forward to the manger and the rebirth of the Christ Child in our lives. We will come to the manger in order to understand what God's message has in store for us. Advent prepares us so that we may carefully listen for God's message. We must carefully listen as He speaks to us. "You have been chosen to spread the Good News of Great Joy, Christ has come." It is when we answer "Here am I, a servant of the Lord" that we will find the inner peace of the nativity to give us the strength to live through the on-going trials that we all are facing. The fourth Advent candle of peace lights our way to find that inner peace which surpasses all understanding. Be prepared with this inner peace to celebrate the nativity, the Good News of God's love because that is the pathway through these troubling times.

The Anthem: ["Mary Did You Know"](#) Agne G

Offering*: ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our loving and Father of peace, as we draw near to our celebration of the nativity we are surrounded with disease and uncertainty. May your Spirit enter our lives through the rebirth of your Son within us. Let us put aside all bitterness and hate so that we may not only find peace with each other but within ourselves. Instill within us the will to accept this renewed life so we can say along with Mary "Here am I a servant of the Lord."

We are thankful for the discovery and distribution of a vaccine for the deadly virus. In the meantime we need the strength and conviction to follow safe guidelines while the virus is rapidly spreading. We continually pray for all those who are giving of themselves by comforting and bringing life-saving procedures to the sick and dying. Let each of us understand the sacrifice they are making and be thankful for their service. Grant to us patience and the will to follow guidelines in order to slow the spread of this deadly disease.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Katie Hawkins, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: [“O Come, O Come Emanuel”](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM more information attached below.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291

Zoom Bible Study

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 300maple

OR

By Telephone: (929) 205-6099

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 914022