

What's on Your Mind?



Encounters
with
characters
in the
Advent story.

Week 2

An Advent Devotional
from the community of faith
at
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
3641 North 56th Street • Phoenix, Arizona 85018

December 6, 2009

Sunday

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What's on Your Mind?

Mary's Unexpected Blessing

Mary – Annunciation

Luke 1:28. "And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

An angel speaks to Mary and tells her that she is to have a child — a very special child who will be a King. Mary, I suppose, was shocked to hear this as she was unmarried and a virgin. This was truly an unexpected event in her young life. She must have wondered how Joseph and her family would react to her being with child. She must have been sick with worry — or was she? Maybe the angel also filled her with peace that only God could give.

As a parent we all think that our child is special. We love them and raise them the best that we can. We worry that we do not do all the right things for them as they grow up. As a young mother I thought that a parent's job was finished when the child reached 19. I found out that I was very wrong about that. We have to trust that the Lord will watch over our loved ones and accept his will. Mary was given an unexpected gift of a child for 33 years. This child, Jesus, changed her life and changed the world as well.

Carol Kauffman

Dear Lord, thank you for your unexpected blessings. We ask you to watch over our families, friends, and our church. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent

December 7, 2009

Monday

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What's on Your Mind? A Jewish Girl at Prayers

Mary – Annunciation

Luke 1:35. *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

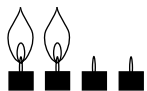
C.S. Lewis wrote of God's plan, "The whole thing narrows and narrows, until at last it comes down to a little point, small as the point of a spear — a Jewish girl at her prayers." The God of all creation, the One whose glory was reflected in the radiance of Moses' face and the transfiguration of Christ, chose to enter humanity in a simple, humble way.

It's not at all surprising that Mary was "greatly troubled" when the angel Gabriel first greeted her. She must have been shaken to her core when he told her she would bear the Son of God. "How will this be?" she asked.

We need to mark Gabriel's reply. The Holy Spirit can do anything. When we surrender our lives to the power of God, as Mary did, miracles happen. Relationships are restored, we are healed, and the light of Christ shines forth from within us to bless others. He can rebuild us from the inside out. We need only ask. Let us invite God's power to overshadow our lives, so Christ is born in us!

Laura Mitchell

Lord of grace, glory, and truth, help me to lay down my arms and surrender to your transforming love. Renew in me a right, humble heart each day. Where I have hurt others, I ask your forgiveness. I ask that you help me to set things right with them. Where others have hurt me, help me to forgive them. I cannot do it on my own. Fill me, restore me, and make me like you. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent

December 8, 2009

Tuesday

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What's on Your Mind? Excuses

The Angel Gabriel

Luke 1:26 – 38. "Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'" (verse 38)

"I'm..."

"Well ... um..."

"I'd like to, but..."

Some sentences are hard to finish, but usually not those that involve excuses — excuses come easily, with the sentences often ending with words like "I'm too busy," or "I was never trained to do that," or "I can't afford that right now," or "I'm too old to do that." When Mary was told that she would give birth to a son who was to be named Jesus, she offered no excuse to avoid the responsibility, but instead stated, "I am the Lord's servant."

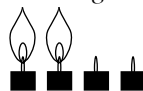
What? Didn't she know that being a servant goes against what she is; that being a servant is contrary to what I am? I'm a star; I'm gifted; I'm the parent; I'm the boss. Servanthood? That's such a demeaning position. And Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

It's Advent, a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and also his death and resurrection. Through Jesus we have forgiveness of sins and the freedom to serve others, and giving to others, even the least of others, is serving God — serving God is far from demeaning.

Let us thank God for the coming of Jesus!

Barb Hayford, Acting Preschool Director

Thank you Father for the gift of your son, and for the opportunity I have to serve those around me. Remind me daily that Christmas is not about what I get, but about what I can give to those in need. Amen!



The Second Week in Advent

December 9, 2009

Wednesday

What's on Your Mind?
Prayerful Expectancy

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Simeon – Redemption

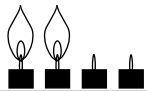
Luke 2:22-35

In these verses Simeon is characterized as a “...good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel.” Furthermore, the Holy Spirit was on him and had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Hence, the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to see the child and in so doing he is characterized as saying, “...God, you can now release your servant, release me in peace as you promised ...with my own eyes I’ve seen your salvation...”

This scripture is a dedicated way to remind us that during the holiday season each year we indeed have seen the salvation promised to us through God’s sending of his only Son to us in the form of man. Even more importantly this scripture challenges our application of our ‘daily faith’ as the basis for us being released from the pressures and consternations of the world. In all things, God has released us in peace through the Gift of his only Son. At times we forget this or get so caught up in the worldly trappings of the season that the very essence of its foundation eludes us. To refocus we must celebrate the Gifts of love, peace and recommitment through the simple act of giving. In today’s world the greatest gift that we can give is to live into our Christian faith, living as role models for peace and faith in all that we do.

Teri Traaen

Holy Father, thank you for sending your most beloved Son in the form of a small child so that the innocence and wonder of his birth causes us to stop — reflect — and recommit to the lives that you have designed for us. Help us to trust in all that you provide and to be witnesses to you in our every action. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent

December 10, 2009

Thursday

What's on Your Mind?
The Waiting Game Pays Off

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Anna

Luke 2:36-38

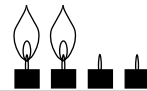
Someone once said to me, “If you want a miracle you’ve got to work for it.” At first I didn’t understand the full implication of this. Sure, prayer is a necessary ingredient in our lives and we could all be more diligent about it. But how do you work to make something happen when that something is beyond your control? We could learn a lot from one of the most obscure characters in the Christmas story, a prophetess named Anna.

The great legacy of her life is that she, “never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day.” For those of you keeping score at home, that’s a lot of fasting and prayer! Early in her life Anna began a conversation with God that for most of us would seem tedious and impossible. Day after day she kept fasting and praying, even after years of receiving no substantive answer. Then one day, the baby Jesus was presented in the temple and her waiting was over. Make no mistake — her fasting and prayers didn’t change God’s timeline for the arrival of the Messiah. Instead, her diligence in maintaining her conversation with God gave her new eyes. The miracle in this story is that she recognized a crying baby as the savior of the world.

Perhaps we spend too much time expecting God to change the world and not enough time expecting God to change us? If you want a miracle you’ve got to work for it!

Pastor Rick

Miraculous God, please give me an eye transplant so that I can recognize the numerous ways you work in the world every day. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent

December 11, 2009

Friday

What's on Your Mind?

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Jesus' Wonderfully Strange Ancestry

Matthew 1:1-17

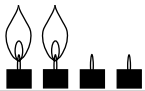
Who starts their literary masterpiece with a long list of names? Many people look at the first page of Matthew's gospel and the first word that comes into their minds is, "boring!" Who cares about Jesus' complicated lineage? Who cares that there are 14 generations between Abraham and David and another 14 generations between David and Jesus? This is no way to draw a reader into the story of the greatest story ever written. Or is it?

Take another look at the names on this particular family tree. Some of the names are recognizable. Abraham. Issac. Jacob. Rahab. Ruth. David. Solomon. Jehoshaphat (not the one prone to jumping, the biblical king). Some of the names are obscure. What is important here isn't the names themselves but what they represent. This list includes kings and prostitutes, wise men and rogues, mighty warriors and slaves. The political flow of these 28 generations includes the rise and fall of a nation, an entire population taken into exile, the rebirth of that nation, and finally brutal occupation by a foreign army. Despite all of this, God continued to work through ordinary people to bring salvation to the world. Nothing stood in God's way.

Jesus' lineage could never be considered sparkling but God's overwhelming commitment to save us can.

Pastor Rick

Mighty God, help us to trust you even when your servants seem strange and our days seem bleak. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent

December 12, 2009

Saturday

What's on Your Mind?

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Feeling the Divine

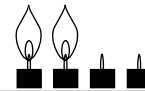
Mary Visits Elizabeth

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

I think I know how Elizabeth felt. When I was about six-months pregnant with our first child, my widening girth, my doctor's assurances, and some vague stirrings were the only evidence I had of the impending birth. Then in a Christmas Eve service, we heard the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth with the blessed news of God's great gift. I knew a little bit about that kind of sharing because my younger sister was also expecting her first child and the mutual joy had brought us closer than we had ever been. As the words about the future John the Baptist leaping for joy were read, I felt my son leap within me for the first time. Through the tears and the wonder and the sheer giddiness, I connected across thousands of years with Elizabeth (and called my sister as soon as I got home). For me, the power of the Gospel rests with quite ordinary scenes like this which remind me that God became a human being. He knew human joy and human sorrow and continues to give us a glimpse of the divine within us all.

Glenda Rauscher

Dear Lord, help us to feel your presence in our lives just as surely as Elizabeth felt her babe leap for joy at the Good News. Amen.



The Second Week in Advent