

Advent Faith

Sermon December 5, 2021 - Second Sunday in Advent

Dear Beloved, in this Advent season, we are called to reflect more deeply on what Christmas is all about and to reflect on the gifts of hope, faith, joy, peace and love. It is a time of preparation when we are preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ, and to welcome His presence into our lives.

Advent refers to the coming of Christ.

The coming includes three references:

- the celebration of Christ's birth who came to us as a human being at Christmas;
- the coming of Christ into people's lives through grace; and
- Christ's second coming at the end of time.

We should have all three comings in our mind, and we should prepare our souls to receive Christ. Let Christ be at the heart of all we do at Christmas. The spirit of Advent is to be ready to receive Christ in our lives, here and now, in a new and deeper way.

Both in Abraham's and Mary's stories, we see faith. They believed and they trusted that the word spoken to them would be fulfilled.

As we read, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favoured woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favour with God! You will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom will never end!"

The angel, Gabriel, shared an announcement with Mary which was supernatural. A miracle, indeed. Mary asked the angel: "What does this have to do with me?" Then she asked: "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "The

Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God.”

I can only imagine how Mary’s head was spinning with the discovery of her impending motherhood. The angel presented some information at the time which did not permit Mary to explore further at the moment.

At this point, I can imagine how Mary paused, then she started to digest these messages. For this, she needed faith in God.

Mary was not afraid to ask: “How?” Questions cause us to grow and learn. Questions stretch our minds and hearts, and increase our understanding. Questions and the exploration for their answers contribute to our faith, even if the questions themselves may ultimately go unanswered.

Then, Mary realized she will become pregnant, and she will give birth to a son. To embrace this message, she had to have FAITH IN GOD.

The child must be given the name Jesus. The child will become a great person and He will be called the “Son of the Most High.” Her Son will inherit “the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.” Finally, His kingdom will never end. He will not just reign for a lifetime but forever. To embrace this message, Mary needed FAITH. To embrace this message, she had to have FAITH IN GOD.

Yet, there is power, grace and beauty of Mary’s response of submission, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.”

Whenever we reflect upon Mary’s response to the Angel’s announcement and explanation, we can be amazed. Here is a teenage female facing misunderstanding and rejection from her family, her betrothed, and her community. For a betrothed woman to bear a child out of wedlock to someone not her husband could potentially result in shunning or worse, stoning. Nevertheless, she submits to the Lord’s will for her life!

Mary had FAITH. Faith is a powerful element that connects and welds us to God in such a manner that goes far beyond our own human comprehension. Our faith in God holds us steady and keeps us safe from the terrifying storms of life. It is the base of our reliance and confidence in God.

With and through faith we get access to the many mind-blowing blessings that God has promised us in His Son Christ Jesus. Faith must be expressed on the grounds of

what God has already done for us by grace through Christ in order for us to receive His many blessings that are in store for us.

Faith is defined as the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

There are two critical aspects in the definition of faith that should really draw our attention:

- things that are promised for the future, and
- things that are present that are invisible.

If something can be seen with the naked eye, then it can no longer be classified as faith. The fundamental idea of faith itself has to do with things that cannot be seen but that are present in the supernatural realm. The truth is that the supernatural realm is way more real than the natural one.

Our faith is laid upon what God says.

Faith helps us to understand who God is, and how He operates.

Faith is able to transform people's lives from the inside out in a marvelous fashion. And we, as believers, are a clear example of what faith is about. Our level of faith determines our level of peace, joy, confidence, strength, and security.

Let us grow our faith in Jesus day by day. Jesus is our Christmas gift from God. Let us, in turn, share that gift with others.

During this Advent, let us wait, serve, love, and trust that the Lord is indeed transforming lives in Jesus Christ even through us. Amen