

Fourth Sunday of Advent
24-12-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16 From David God's Kingdom will be established forever

Psalms 89: 1-4, 19-27 God's Kingdom Lasts forever

Romans 16: 25-27 Jesus now disclosed and available for All

Luke 1: 26-38 The birth of Jesus foretold to Mary by Angel Gabriel

Introduction

Today is the 4th Sunday of Advent. The last Sunday of Advent.
Our time of preparation is almost over.
On Monday, tomorrow, we celebrate the Joy of Christmas.

Throughout Advent there is generally biblical progression towards the birth of Jesus. In this progression we normally look at the roles people have played, in reaching the point where the Savior of the world entered it in human form.

Overview first 3 weeks of Advent

The first week of Advent looks at the role of the Patriarchs beginning with Abraham and Sarah. Abraham obeyed God, and God made a covenant with him to make him the father of many nations. The Jewish nation traces their roots back to Abraham.

The second week of advent looks at the Prophets. Those within the Jewish nation who God chose to tell the people of the coming Messiah.

Last week we looked at John the Baptist and the role he played in preparing the way for Jesus.

Advent 4 – Today we look at Mary

This week we look at Jesus' earthly Mother – Mary.

Why was Mary chosen to be the mother of God?
I suppose we could look at the first reading from 2 Samuel and say that both she and Joseph were in Bethlehem because they were descended from David, so it was part of God's plan.

But, because of the census, there would have been quite a number of people in Bethlehem who were descended from David. Why Mary?

As far as we know, Mary was apparently a very ordinary person. She was not rich or wellborn. It would seem that she was an unlikely representative of humankind to give birth to the saviour? Or was she?

Mary was so simple, so plain, so ordinary, so much like the rest of us. I suppose that's the answer, isn't it? The flesh that became Jesus came from the body of one who was just like us. The body that gave birth to him, the body that nourished him from the milk of her breast, was just as plain, and ordinary, and vulnerable as our flesh.

Mary's ordinariness allowed God to make it absolutely clear, that although Jesus was God, He was also truly and fully human. No one could say that Jesus only appeared to be truly human—or that he was not like one of us in every aspect of our bodies. No one could say he was different because he was born into a wealthy or royal family.

We don't seem to know a real lot about Mary. Yet we do know of her humility, and her faith, and her obedience to God. She was a person who was completely "herself." She was not pretentious, or boastful. She was wholly content to be who and what she was, and to do what God gave her to do. She was open to what the angel had to say to her, but honest enough to question how she could possibly conceive and bear a son, considering she was a virgin. Yet she was obedient and willing to do what God had called her to, even if it seemed daunting. She said in reply to God:

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

So, we can well understand why God chose one so young and inexperienced to be the mother of the Lord. She had not grown old enough to become skeptical or cynical about such things. She was fresh enough in her humanity to embrace an accepting attitude so that she could hear and heed the word of God's angel.

In addition, Mary's faith was uncomplicated and pure enough for her to believe in miracles. She was able to accept a truth that came from outside human knowledge and beyond human capacity.

We also know that Mary had courage. She was willing to stand up to whatever gossip or rejection might come her way because she was pregnant and not married. She was willing to suffer a mother's worst fate, bearing a son who would necessarily be taken from her all too soon.

She was willing to give him away so the whole world could have him.

Later, she would watch her son walk the rocky road of a controversial religious leader, even see him reject her on one occasion, and see her son

receive threats and abuse. Finally, Mary would stand at the foot of a cross, helplessly watching him die a humiliating death.

In a way, we are presented with this same message as the one declared to Mary by God's angel. Mary, the mother of our Lord, helps us believe in the miraculous possibilities of God—Mary helps us believe in the truth that only the power of God can produce salvation from the body of an insignificant and ordinary young girl who lived in an obscure village. Mary helps us understand that as God chose her, he chooses us in our common-ness and ordinariness to be the continuing instruments of his flesh, here in this world.

As followers of Christ, we are called to live out our lives like Mary, and we live this life together as the body of Christ, in the same plainness of humanity that was made Godly by Christ's sharing it.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he says to them,

“Christ, who is your life.”

So, in this we are to be like Mary. We are to be the bearers of the Christ—for our bodies are the only place where he may live now on this earth.

We are the body of Christ—when we let Christ dwell within us.

And when we share Christ with others, God will be with us always.

By opening our lives to Christ, we, like Mary, are blessed among all men and women. By sharing Christ, we, like Mary, take part in the greatest, most wonderful thing the world has ever known.

Conclusion

As Christmas Day rapidly approaches, are we ready to receive the reality of God within us?

Are we ready to put the Christ within us to work?

Are we ready to do his will as we love God and our neighbors as ourselves?

Mary was able to claim:

“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Are we also able to claim this? Amen.