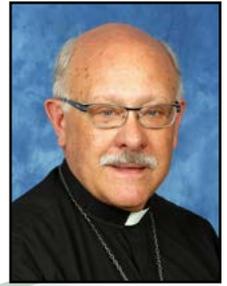




Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Second Sunday of Advent

December 9, 2018

What Do YOU Expect? Ready or not...Jesus is Coming Soon!

Luke 3:1-6

Did you hear their titles? Emperor (Tiberius), Governor (Pontius Pilate), Ruler of Galilee (Herod), his brother, another Ruler of Ituraea and Trachonitis (Philip), Ruler of Abilene (Lysanias), High Priests, two of them. (Annas and Caiaphas).

Get it? One Emperor, one governor, three rulers, and two high priests...sounds like the beginning of a joke. As in "Did you hear the one about...?"

Luke's story of Jesus sets us up to realize anew the nature of true power---Chapters one and two are the sweet story which we wait for on Christmas Eve; so simple, two sets of parents, that angel, two little boys born, John and Jesus. All seemed calm and bright around what we will sing soon is a SILENT and a HOLY NIGHT round yon virgin, mother and child.

To be sure, Luke gives a "spoiler alert" in John's father's song; Zechariah's prophesy that "God has raised up a mighty savior for us" and his son John "will be called the prophet of the Most High...

- ✠ to go before,
- ✠ to give knowledge,
- ✠ to give light,
- ✠ to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Then, Mary's song's, sung at forte..."the Mighty One...

- ✠ who has shown strength,
- ✠ who has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts,
- ✠ who has brought down the powerful from their thrones...lifted up the lowly.

Our Gospel portion is clear---times are changing and the whole menu of socio-economic-political-religious power, could not muster/create/call/stir up the power of God...listen again...

"THE WORD OF GOD CAME TO JOHN SON OF ZECHARIAH IN THE WILDERNESS."
The wilderness...

No pomp and circumstance, 21-gun salute, or "Hail to the Chief;" to John who would once say of Jesus "He must increase, but I must decrease."

What were they expecting? Anticipation high for those who heard the man from the wilderness; the one whose lifestyle was counter-everything the world then, and the world now, thinks of as "POWER."

On Friday, Nancy and I made a run to the Bellevue Center of Power, aka "The Bellevue Collection." 2:30 in the afternoon and all seemed manageable...a bite to eat, a walk around, a gift or two...by 5, security was tightening and the crowds were forming...by 6, it was pretty clear that something was afoot..."falling snow, dazzling lights, festive music, toy drummer and dancers, and see all your favorite characters." Snowflake Lane and I began to imagine what it would be like to have one character with a sign and out of place outfit crying out "Repent, be baptized, the end is near."

{By 6:32, we had escaped the perimeters of Bellevue Square to the edges of the commute and to home.}

Advent 2 (the 35th Advent that we have shared!) It is a new time, a new season, a soon new year of life for the redeemed of the Lord. What are YOU expecting? Because at the remembering of the birth, the hopes and fears of all the years will be met in the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus, son of Joseph, Son of God, Savior of the World and Lord of our lives. And ready or not, Jesus is Coming Soon, and Very Soon. This One with whom we are united in Christ forever.

We live in places often flooded with amnesia and forgetting how blessed we are in our cocoons of privilege. He stood at the corner with a sign: "Homeless, hungry, anything will help."

We live in times when the idolatry of consumerism nips at the heels of sufficiency where we are tempted to get the array of upgrades that we suppose will bring us truth and deeper knowledge in the cocoon of a culture that can deliver anything in an hour.

The fear laden and anxiety ridden voices that warn about the new year as one where they many be.... you fill in the blanks!

In our world where we are most often measured by worth and performance; one more meeting, one more consultant; one more sale; where many are cuing towards new day resolutions most often made at end of year and are lost at the dawning of Ash Wednesday confession.

Into our days and times, we are called to the truth that we are not saved by metrics, the next shiny object or upgrade that tempts us...

Worth is gifted in the God who reaches into our inner most places where we hear "all will be well," "be healed," and "be well-ing" through the "telling and trusting" that Jesus is here, beside, within, tamping guilt down, and lifting us up to life that is true, life that is abundant, life that begins anew in the worship we share this day.

To be the peace, shalom, that passes all human understanding.

In Jesus Christ, God is expecting to give us a future. A space of time to live and to be the fellowship of the redeemed ones who know where we are going and who is going with us! And the time is now!

To what many believed was Paul's best loved community and happy place, not perfect place, but a made whole place in Christ--Philippi, he pours out his heart in relationship.

He is in prison; yet, even there he find lavish comfort and expectations met within the family of God in Christ. Touched by memory with gratitude, sustain in the present with creation through prayers and know that, in Christ, he, with them, has a future which bring joy and hope.

What do YOU expect of discipleship in these days, this time of your lives, our life together? It is, I believe, to trust fully in the promise born out of the Faith of three couples: Abraham and Sarah, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Joseph and Mary. Net results, born anew in Christ and raised to life forever.

As we left Bellevue Square, just in the 'saint nick of time,' she stood at the border of mall and Macys. Red Kettle curator, with a paper bell that did not ring (That's the way of it in BSquare!) I watched for a minute. Her consistent "ringing" was her voice saying "Merry Christmas" in faithful repetition.

I approached, five Presidential Dollars in hand (3 Lincolns, 1 Hoover, and 1 FDR!). Rang them in and said "Merry Christ-mas." She stopped eyes and heart met in the mall and she said, "Oh, you know." And I said, "And we are known." (The reverse of return, left in her hand two wooden crosses.)

In Advent, we know that the Child grew! What Child is This? Christ the King who died for us, lives for us, and meets our every expectation. In His name, we walk and live until He comes again. Amen.