

A Child Shall Come

Sermon notes for the sermon

Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young

On Sunday, December 18, 2011

Did you know that globally there are 4 births every second of every day? This means that: 250 children are born every minute; 15,000 children are born every hour; 360,000 children are born every day; 131.4 million are born every year. It boggles the imagination when you think of it – by the end of our worship service today 18,750 children will have been born throughout the world; in a little over an hour 18,750 babies will come into this world.

So many little lives and yet when we hear about a baby being born or see a newborn in her mother's arms we continue to experience something very special and unique. There is nothing routine about giving birth and witnessing new life. It remains as wonderful and mysterious as the first birth recorded in holy scripture: Cain; that first child who would grow to become one who will murder his brother Abel. As we look upon a new born child we look with hope and with fear. Will this child be healthy – I hope so? Will this child be a good person – I hope so? Will this child grow to be a productive member of society – I hope so? Will this child follow the ways of God and walk in the footsteps of Jesus – I hope so?

There is much uncertainty that surrounds the birth of a child, especially in the hearts of the parents. Will we be able to take care of our child? Will we be good parents?

How will we provide for our child? Will we be good examples for our child and raise her with the love that she will need? With the announcement that a child is to be born a family is filled with joy and doubts. A family has less than 9 months to prepare for this child and those 9 months will be filled with happy/joyous times as well as doubtful/questioning times.

Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she was pregnant and would give birth to God's child. It was not a request or an invitation; it was a birth announcement from a heavenly messenger that totally turned upside down (or in today's expression, ROCKED) Mary's and Joseph's world. They had less than 9 months to prepare for the birth of Jesus. They were engaged and not married – should they break the engagement so as not to disgrace their families or should they move up the wedding date? Joseph had been trained at his father's side and was still acquiring skills needed to be a successful carpenter – will he, as a novice, be able to provide enough income to care for a newborn child? Mary was a young woman and had been at her mother's side all of her life – had she learned enough about caring for a family to care for Joseph and baby Jesus? In opening herself to accept the precious gift of life that God had provided Mary opened a proverbial can of worms for herself, her future husband, their families and all of creation. She was to carry God's child for nine months and give birth to the one who would be the Savior of all humanity.

It is no wonder that Mary ran to her Aunt Elizabeth to share the shocking and good news. She did not run to her fiancé; she did not seek out her mother's advice;

she did not turn to a close friend; Mary travelled away from Nazareth to the hill country to find her aunt Elizabeth who was also pregnant. Perhaps aunt Elizabeth would know what to do; or, perhaps she could just hide there and have the baby in secret – the fewer who knew the better and Mary might just be able to keep it quiet enough so that her and Joseph's families would not have to live in disgrace in Nazareth. Mary was young, scared, and anxious; yet, there was calmness about her and a faithfulness that enabled her to make good decisions. Going to Elizabeth was the best decision she made; she had someone else, living through the same experience, that she could receive encouragement and strength from. Elizabeth, the older and wiser one, and Mary, the younger and impulsive one together as women of God's choosing to change, transform the world.

The question for us today is how are we preparing for the return of Jesus Christ? When Christ comes in all his glory will he find us faithful, accepting, ready to receive him and follow where he leads? Just as Mary and Elizabeth learned that a child is coming so we are told in this season of preparation that Christ is coming. Will Christ find, as he did at the time of John the Baptist, a community ready to receive him? We are called to be that community in waiting looking, watching, hoping for the return of our Savior for the redemption of the world, the redemption of creation. Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King.