

December 20, 2020  
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

### He Cares

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we've been working our way through this Advent series, we have been looking at that word prophecy. Prophecy, Mark says, it is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it rightly is so; because we saw in the first week as we looked at the candles of our Advent wreath, we are to prepare for the Lord's coming. How did the prophets tell us to prepare? Repent. In the second week we saw with prophecy, in the prophecy candle, that prophecies about the Messiah were all fulfilled.

Last week we had the Joy candle, but again it took us back to prophecy, and we were told by Saint Paul to not quench the Spirit. How is the Spirit quenched According to Saint Paul? It is by despising the prophecies. Instead, we are to hold fast to what is true, good doctrine, good law, the fulfillment, the foundations of our faith which come through the prophecies. And we're to abstain from that which is evil. Which is, well anything that is against the prophecies, the proclamation of God's word.

Today, the last Sunday of Advent, we deal with prophecies again. Prophecies, I guess you could say part four. Again, we go back to the Old Testament. But this time not to the book Isaiah. We go to 2nd Samuel, where in chapter seven, we read: "Now when the King, (that is King David) lived in his house." What do we know about this house? In chapter 5 verse 11 we read that King Hiram of Tyer, which is in Lebanon; he is the one who built this house for David. He sent cedar logs, carpenters, and stonemasons. So, it was a house built out of stone most likely granite and cedar which even today is a very prized building material. It's more than just living in this beautiful house that's been built for him by another king; we also read, 'and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies.' This is a time period where Israel is at its highest, its peak, it's pinnacle. It isn't just the little country of Israel that we know today, it also included all the land down to the Nile.

So, part of what is Egypt. It extended East and Southeast into what is now Saudi Arabia. It encompassed what is today modern Jordan and Syria, Lebanon, which is where King Hiram was overthrown. Because King Hiram was saying, 'I'm going to work with you guys, don't do battle. I don't have any problem with you.'

And so, Israel was quite large, and it was because the Lord had delivered them into the hands of David. We read that the king, David said to Nathan the Prophet; this is Nathan the Prophet who would in just a couple chapters confront David because of his sinful acts with Bathsheba. This is a time where we can also see that when things are very good, even King David could fall because well, let's say he had idle hands. But Nathan the Prophet comes to him and King David says to Nathan the Prophet, this is it. This is why the Lord loved David. He said, "see now I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells in a tent. He had just brought the Ark of the Covenant, and the Tabernacle, the Tent that enclosed it; he had just brought it to Jerusalem. As he brought it, there was great fanfare, and David himself danced before it. He offered burnt offerings, and he gave peace offerings. He blessed the people in the name of the Lord; probably using the blessing we often use at the end of the church service. The blessing that was given to Aaron, the first high priest. "Now, may the Lord God bless you and keep you, may He make His face to shine upon you, be gracious unto you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace." Even the fed all the people Royal banquet. And amidst all of this joy of the Ark of the covenant coming in and celebrating and worshiping God, Michal, the daughter of King Saul, rebuked the King. Why? Well, he was just showing way too much emotion in dancing at all before the people. King David's response was 'I will make myself yet more contemptible than this.' In other words, if worshipping the Lord is contemptible and disgraceful; I will become even more contemptible and disgraceful.

You see that is the heart of King David. He acknowledged the Lord; that it was the Lord who gave them peace. He praised and he blessed God; that is, he gave the good word to God. He gave all the glory to God. He did not take it for himself. He desired to do even more for the Lord, and he desired to do it publicly so that all the people knew. It was not David; it was the Lord. And when he looked at his house and he looked

at that tent, he felt God deserved better than him. In other words, King David loved God and that love was shown. This is the heart the Lord loved.

And yet, we read that, that night, the Lord went to Nathan and said, 'go back to King David and say to him, ask him, would you build me a house to dwell in? I haven't had a house since my people Israel left Egypt. In all that time, did I go to any of the judges, did I go to Moses to Joshua to Gideon to any of them and say why haven't you built me a house yet? I never asked for a house.' And then God turns it back to David and He says, 'but David you won't build me a house, but I'm going to build you a house, I will make your name great.' In fact, He says, 'your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' And of course, what the Lord is Speaking of here is the Messiah. King David, the Messiah will be your heir, and He will do what you can never do; but He will be your heir, and He will be known as the son of David. And He is going to establish an eternal Kingdom for all time.

And so, we now go into our gospel, and we hear the very beginning of the coming of the Messiah, as the Angel, Gabriel comes to Mary in the sixth month. That doesn't mean he came in June; no, it immediately follows the announcement to Zechariah and Elizabeth that she would bear a son that he would be the one who would be the voice calling in the wilderness. So, it's in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. And the Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth. That's important because again it's fulfilling a prophecy from Isaiah. And we get a little bit more, he was sent from God to a city of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin. This takes us back to again Isaiah; another prophecy is being fulfilled. And the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel says, 'greetings, oh favored one. The Lord is with you.' And we read that Mary was troubled. Well, wouldn't you be a little troubled if an Angel just showed up in your room? And even though it says 'greetings, The Lord is with you,' it is a fearful thing to be found in the hands of living God. And it is a fearful thing to be found in the presence of one of his holy Angels. And so, she is troubled. Gabriel says, what all Angels say; "don't be afraid!" And goes back to prophecy.

And behold, you will conceive in your way and bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David. And He will reign over the House of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom, there will be no end.” There we have it! The Lord told David; “I’m going to establish your throne forever. And here is the answer, this child that Mary is going to bear is going to be that one. He’s the Messiah who will establish an eternal Kingdom. As far as being the son of David; well, we also read that Mary was betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. All that prophecy coming together right here; hundreds, thousands of years of anticipation.

Which takes us back to the Advent wreath, the 4th candle, the last purple candle, the last candle of royalty; it’s called the Anticipation candle. It’s what the people were anticipating from the time that God spoke to Satan in the garden of Eden and said that through the seed of the woman would come one who would crush Satan and everything he had done. So, there’s these thousand years of anticipation building, building, and here’s the very beginning. The announcement to Mary, ‘you Mary, are going to bear that son.’ What a remarkable message! And yet Mary is totally human, and she says, how will this be? I’m a Virgin. I can’t have a son.

The angel says, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you.’ And boy, this one just really again, kind of blew my mind. When I really thought of what it is saying; “and the power of the Almighty will overshadow you.” What is a shadow? A shadow is when light has been blocked, and there is a place of no light. Well, that’s what the world’s been living in, a world that’s in a shadow. There’s no light. The light of God, we keep moving further and further away from Him and building up more and more to block His light. But in this situation, the power of the Almighty, is going to overshadow you. Anything that blocks the light of God, He’s going to overcome in the case of Mary. In other words, Mary, there is no limitation to what almighty God is going to do and can do. Therefore, since it’s God who is overshadowing you, taking that which is impossible and making it possible; His child will be called, I quote: “the Son of God.”

Now note, Mary didn't even have a chance to question, to ask for a sign or anything before Gabriel just continues and it tells us something. God knows. God cares. He cares for our needs. He knew what this young lady was thinking. He knew that what she was receiving was mind blowing. It was it was something that would overwhelm anyone to be hearing this kind of news. I mean consider, here she is engaged, and she's going to be pregnant. But it is not from some other man. You know what's Joseph is going to think? What are the people going to think? She's overwhelmed, and so God just answers questions, things that are coming up before she even has a chance to ask them. He says to her, 'behold your relative Elizabeth.' We do not know what relative she was. Most people think she was her aunt. 'Your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing is impossible with God.' So often people want a sign. They want to ask for a sign because it gives you comfort. It is looking and saying, oh look, it's really real. God knew what Mary needed. She needed to sign. Here's the sign, but it's even more than that. Here's someone Mary, an older person, someone you know, someone who loves me the Lord whose husband Zechariah has served Me his whole life. Here's someone you can go to, someone you can go and help in the last three months, the third term of her pregnancy. Someone you can talk to, someone you can learn from, someone who has a lot of experience. This is our God. He knows us, and better yet, this is where Christmas really starts to get important. And that name Emmanuel, comes into play.

He doesn't just know us, Emmanuel, God with us. He is God with us. And He can do the impossible. So, we really do anticipate the message of Christmas. Especially, in a year like this. A year with pandemic, a year with contested elections, a year with all sorts of strife. And it turns it into a time of hope. But more than hope, it is a promise. A promise from God. We're not just in His hands; I like to sing that song with the children. "He's got the whole world in His hands." He is God with us. He is Emmanuel. He loves us. He cares for us and He will act on our behalf, and He has acted on our behalf, by giving us His Son. Just as He acted on David's behalf, made a promise to him, gave peace in Israel, overcame all of their enemies; it was more than David had even asked or imagine for, so David rejoiced and give glory to God.

And that God, who took a personal interest in King David; took a personal interest in Mary, provided exactly what she needed; has taken a personal interest in you and me and given us His Son. And He walks beside us, and He knows our deepest needs, and He will act; just as He did with David and with Mary. Oftentimes before we even know to ask. And what will our response be? It is my hope and my prayer that we, like David will say I will acknowledge Him publicly and praise His Name. Or, like Mary after hearing all of this, she goes into this song which we call the Magnificat and she says, 'my soul rejoice is in the Lord!' As we march towards Christmas let COVID concerns fall away, let election concerns fall away, tax concerns fall away, business concerns fall away, economic concerns fall away. Let it all fall away and rejoice because we have Emanuel, God with us. He knows our every need; He has provided for our greatest needs and He will take us all the way home.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.