

The Advent Of The Lord Is Now... US!

"Mary, Joseph, and I Say... YES!"

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-55

December 19, 2021

Fourth Week of Advent

And this fourth week of Advent,

we hear
both Mathew and Luke begin their
writings
with an "overview" parable...a story to
set up the bigger story they are to share.

For each, the Christmas story serves as a
preview of the focus for the rest of their
telling of the story of who Jesus is.

Mathew wrote to Jews hoping to bring
them to Jesus.

He writes a proof text Christmas story
trying to prove

Jesus is the human incarnation
of Old Testament prophecy.

So he traces Joseph's lineage at the
gospel's beginning.

Luke, writing to gentiles,
wants to convince his hearers that Jesus
is divine. And so the star, and angels,
and virgin birth...story symbols used to
prove the divinity of the Greek deities of
the day.

They both develop their stories as the
last written part of
their gospel, writing *the beginning*
after they know the ending.

They develop stories not known to
earlier writers. Paul and Mark wrote
earlier than Matthew and Luke and so
did not know of these birthing stories.

Their writings are deemed by academia
to be most accurate.

So, we could say these 2 stories are more
*like myths to influence than histories to
inform.*

But still powerful and holy stories!

In Matthew, there is actually no "birth"
story...just the dream of Joseph of what
is to come and then a void till the story
of King Herod and the Wise Ones.

And in Luke, the word virgin could have
been translated all these centuries as
"young woman".

I wonder why that choice of translation
continued to be made without further
explanation of the story telling
technique allowing many assumptions
to be made.

(Virgin from Luke and Eve as temptress
in OT...false archetypes for women.)

There is no donkey, manger, or inn
keeper in either story.

I wonder how we have come to tell the
story the way we have in our tradition.
Combining them and adding to them...

What need of ours is met in telling the
story
the way we do?

But we do know *every choice* these
writers made was sincere
and with only good intentions
to get you to keep on
reading! May it be so!

From the beginning of their telling right to present time...knowing the context of these stories

and how and why they were framed and told the way they are

is life giving as it brings meaning to them...

the writer's meaning

and the writer's intention is to bring us toward God!

These stories are
freedom making and Christ empowering.
Easter oriented.

In fact, the only reason we have Christmas is because believers experienced that first Easter!

Yet...

By the 13th Century there was already a profound sense that Christmas was just another holiday,
unless you made it a holy-day for yourself.

Meister Eckhart, a mystic of the time, asked:

“What good is it that Mary gave birth to Jesus
if I don't do the same?

What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine child takes place unceasingly but
does not take place within myself?

And what good to me if Mary is full of grace,
if I am not also full of grace?

What good is it to me for the creator to give birth to His Son if I do not also give birth to
Him in my time and culture?”

Hearing this, I guess culture hasn't changed all that much despite all the modern advances over the years.

We are still plagued by a cultural malaise concerning the season.

Many of us are still asking the very same questions as Meister Eckhart.

And the answer to our quandary is the same now as it was then for Meister Eckhart:

We are all meant to be mothers of God.
Giving birth daily! We father what is holy within!
Is this knowing enough for you?

Quite enough?

What will it take for you to “be” Christmas?

There is a child of grace...hope, joy, love, power
in each one of us, placed within us
before our very births...
a child waiting to be born again.

God is beckoning us to give birth to the best in us.
God beckons us back to the cradle, the manger of our existence.

Christmas is for those who refuse to give up and let their hearts grow old.

Christmas is for those to whom life comes newly and with purpose each and every day.

Christmas is for those who can let yesterday go so today life can be full of new possibility.

Christmas is for those who are agitated by newness (not aggravated by newness) whatever their age!

Life is for living, for those in whom Christmas is a feast of the soul that never ends,
a celebration of the constancy of change,
a call to begin once more the journey to human joy and holy meaning in everyday life.

You see, this is no cuddly baby born in a manger...
the words of the Magnificat reveal a very strong and present God, even as a baby.

Mary's song holds up a new socio-political order...the new paradigm for life which Jesus is about to bring...

justice and freedom as the common good,
for each one and for all...or for no one!

No, this is not a cuddly baby but a baby who looks you in the eyes and says,
“What are you going to do about your life?”

How can we ready our lives, like Mary did, like Joseph did,
to be turned upside down so God can do a new thing?

Here are some seasonal instructions for living (ways of resistance and renewal) as I know them...

You are renewed, each time you stay home with loved ones rather than run around frantically meeting the season's expectations.

You are renewed, each time you allow yourself to feel the feelings you really feel and then do something constructive with them.

You are renewed, each time you surround yourself with others who long to talk about important things.

You are renewed, each time you resist passing judgment on someone else...think about that in this political climate, offering compassion instead.

You are renewed, each time you proactively do for others what you would want them to do for you...

*if you were in the same situation...and we all know,
someday we will be!*

You are renewed, each time you support fellow seekers -here.

You are renewed each time you say yes to ministry
in our community, supporting its quest to survive and thrive
not for our own good but to reach out to an aching world calling out for healing and
hope!

Just like Mary, **you are** a part of the righting of the world...begun in her and continuing in you.

Just like Joseph, you are from a divine lineage...the seed of divine life is in you!

Mary, full of grace, ponders her birthing Jesus, and all it will mean to her life and this world.

Let each of us, in a rarified holy moment of quite enough ...ponder what it would mean
if we gave birth to Christ
in our lives on Saturday...every day!

Like Mary and Joseph, we are told "do not be afraid" and given the choice to respond to the purpose offered, or not.

The holy within...

it is like that dream you're hoping will come true...

the vision you have...for a life of integrity and justice and peace.

The holy within, it helps you find purpose for the day.

Oh that the angel would appear, the dream play out, the doorbell or the telephone ring
and as you answer it everything about who you are and your role in God's grand
scheme be revealed!

You are renewed when your deepest longing intersects your deepest gratitude.

You come to that place within which is the holy waiting to be born into the world
through you!

You find a deep wisdom that is not afraid.

Then...we know the difference between the things we can change and the things we
cannot.

We go with what we can change.

From a place of integrity deep within us...
we wisely give birth to God's deepest desires,
our purpose...

birthing what others deem impossible...

Advent...a rarified moment
when we've had "quiet enough"
or realize we do indeed have "quite enough!"

...Will we pay attention?

...Will we let ourselves be astonished?

...Will we tell about it?

Will we BE Christmas?