

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5: 1 – 4a; Psalm 80; Hebrews 10: 5 – 10; Luke 1: 39 – 45

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Reflecting on the readings for this last Sunday of Advent, I was struck by a rather odd thought . . . I am sure many of us have been to various “Magic Shows” – and at such events, a favorite saying for the entertainer seems to be: “pick a card, any card” – with the expectation for the one doing the picking that something amazing is about to happen. As I read and re-read the scriptures – Micah, Psalms, Hebrews, Luke . . . I could almost hear this same invitation . . . pick a phrase, any phrase . . . and expect something amazing to happen. So, I invite you to try this . . . here are a few to start off with. . .

“You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come one who is to be ruler in Israel” – You, (insert your own name here!) may see yourself as too small, too unimportant, too ordinary to be a bearer of God’s presence and love . . . but in this scripture, you are told just the opposite . . . from you will come God’s blessing, God’s presence and hope – after all, you have been chosen for your place in the story of creation from ancient times – God waiting until this very moment when your gift could be offered to a waiting world!

“He shall be peace” Is this not a most often heard greeting and wish in these Advent days and Christmas time to follow. How many of our most loved Christmas songs speak of peace as the gift we wait for, long for. Yet the amazing word from Micah – Jesus IS our peace . . . maybe not in the manner of making everything go right every day, but rather in walking the journey with us, loving , supporting, encouraging us in each moment of our days – letting us know his presence is always with us – what better peace is there than this?

“Let us see your face” God’s face is everywhere around us . . . what a gift the new eyes to let us see the revelation of God in creation – the life we share with each other, with all that exists – the amazing interconnectedness between all that our Creating God has brought into being . . . God’s face is everywhere waiting to be seen each time we turn our face to look.

“Mary set out and traveled in haste” A journey of exploration, a journey to serve, a journey to share the wonderful, amazing work of God in the lives of two faithful women. Are we being asked to see all our journeys of these busy days as a chance to explore God’s gifts in our lives . . . all the busy journeys of shopping or visiting family or delivering gifts – are they for us like this journey of Mary to Elizabeth, a journey inspired by God’s goodness, journeys to serve and to bring God’s goodness . . .

“The infant leaped in her womb . . . for joy” How are your encounters with others these days causing a leap of joy within you? How are you being filled with the Holy Spirit of

joy. The other day, while waiting in an office, I had a chance encounter with a lovely woman who worked there. As our conversation unfolded, she shared with me how she had been waiting for three years for a place to live, being homeless during much of this time or having to share shelter with others, and now at last was able to move to a small apartment. How did you get through such a difficult time I inquired. Her response: being homeless was scary, but I was always giving praise, I knew God had me. Now, after three years, I continue to walk in grace, in astonishment, gratitude and praise for the grace in which I walk. What is the grace you walk in each day? Let it astonish you!

“Blessed are you who believe that what is spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled”
Now it is your turn, pick a phrase, any phrase . . . let it speak a word of amazement and wonder in your heart . . . Believe it! Then, may your encounter with a God who is with you, and loving you, sing in you all through these last busy days before our celebration of Emmanuel, born again for us at Christmas!