

“Advent’s Buoyancy”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

Fourth Sunday of Advent

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The gospel lesson is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 through 38. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’

Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. Let’s pray. Holy Son of God, bless the reading of your word today. Grant understanding, and bring

us to a place in our hearts that settles our business, calms and focuses our attention on you, and continues to teach us to trust as our hope and waiting continues to toward the arrival of the Christ child. Amen.

Here we are moving our way toward Christmas. We're at the last Sunday of Advent. During the weeks approaching Christmas, I've felt this peaceful conflict inside. I embrace the waiting, yet it feels arduous and difficult at times. The hope that Christ is coming is sure, but sometimes against the rush of the season I struggle to feel the peace and hope.

Regardless of the upsets, I keep looking and waiting and expecting. We all embrace the upsets that life brings. We have no choice. The deep disappointments all around us, yet, there's this hope that goes within us. We may feel deep sadness over events that are occurring, but we have this hope—it's buoyant and resilient. We may feel impatient over the events we see happening, yet we know we learn patience in the midst of feeling impatient. We're invited by God to grow in our hope right where we are—letting go of all the things that seem out of place in our lives and unsettled. We move in the direction God wants us to go, because we trust in a God that fills us with hope.

In this story we have a picture of two women. Mary, the mother of Jesus was from nothing town Galilee in the middle of nowhere. A place called Nazareth. It was an unknown city, just the kind you pass through looking for a pit stop and a bite to eat. Elizabeth, Mary's relative, was older and without a child. She was feeling shame and dealing with rejection because she was barren. So we have two women—both run-of-the-mill and garden variety in many ways.

In the blink of an eye the impossible happens. An angel appears to Mary and tells her she's favored among women and that she'll bear the Son of God. And Elizabeth, she's told she'll bear a son too in her old age. Both women—favored

and regarded by God! How magnificent! Both women have moved from a place of impossibilities to possibilities!

Mary was perplexed and confused about what the angel said to her. She wondered how she could bear a son. She was a virgin. And the angel said the babe would be a holy child. She thought to herself, “Why should God look upon me? A teenager in a nothing town Galilee—there’s nothing special about me.” We hear the same surprise concerning Elizabeth. The angel’s confession about Elizabeth’s pregnancy confirms that “Nothing is impossible with God.”

It sounds like both women felt an absence of God in their lives because of the circumstances that surrounded them. But listen again to what happens. Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, how will I conceive since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.” Amazing! The situation goes from impossibility to possibility in a moment!

It’s in these three verses we find Advent’s buoyancy for our lives—lives that feel imperfect and are filled with worry and fear. Because of God’s presence in Mary’s life, she goes from a girl born on the wrong side of the tracks, to a prophet who will bear God’s Son. She willingly accepts a life of discipleship and proclaims “let it be with me according to your word.”

This is the transition needed as we approach Christmas—to travel *in* the direction with God that he’s moving toward. To make room for *how* God is moving. To trust God even if we don’t know the outcome and to embrace a new identity as Mary did. She had little knowledge or understanding of what she was

committing to. She just trusted and walked with God receiving the buoyant hope that God provides.

When we acknowledge God's presence to be active in our unsettled lives—we give up a *perceived* control. We step onto God's path. Oh we voice our distress and confusion to God, but we trust. The hope and trust that God gives is buoyant. It floats alongside our worries and concerns and eventually, we learn to just watch our worries sink. Let's make this transition in our lives. Let this kind of Advent buoyancy be our response to God and a pattern we embrace throughout the year.

Let's pray. Lord we reach out for a hope and trust that's buoyant. Help us to trust you more each day. Show us the way to journey alongside you as we let go and embrace this pattern for living. As the shepherds saw a star on a cold winter's night, move us to look up day and night to you. As the wise men looked up and sought for their King, help us to follow this great light and embrace this Advent buoyancy year round. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.