

December 24, 2017  
Advent 4  
ILC, Wichita, KS  
Luke 1: 26-38; “Stay Calm! ”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text that forms the basis for my message today is taken from the Gospel reading. I would like to reread the first six verses of the Gospel for today:

**<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed<sup>[a]</sup> to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.<sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”**

**<sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”<sup>[c]</sup>**

**<sup>35</sup>And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born<sup>[d]</sup> will be called holy—the Son of God.**

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ.

My friends have you seen the advertisements on Social Media or in the Newspaper... **“Today is the last shopping day before Christmas Day tomorrow!”** That phrase can create panic in the hearts of a person who does not have their Christmas shopping done. Have you ever sensed that? Panic at Christmas time?

Part of what Christmas is all about is answering that sense of panic or any other sense of panic?

Panic... do you recall a situation in your life... where you sensed panic. I have had too many to remember them all.. but one that stands out in my mind... is a situation that gave me cause for fear of elevator rides.

When I was in my 20's the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod awarded me a scholarship to study at the American Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. While there I did not live in the student apartments... I lived in a little Italian hotel. It is named the Albergo Adriano or Hotel Adrians... by Adrian's tomb. It was a very small hotel... with a very small elevator. The elevator in this hotel was barely big for 2 people... I had already gotten on the elevator...when a very ....healthy.... Italian woman climbed in to join me for an elevator ride.

About half way between floors... this elevator broke down... and so did this Italian woman. She started screaming, jumping up and down... and beating on me. She totally lost any sense of stability... which of course... added to my sense of instability.... For as this woman would jump up and down in the elevator and scream... I could feel the elevator cables starting to give way. I imagined the worse!

One of the hotel staff came by, heard the woman screaming and yelled down the top of the elevator shaft... that he would go to get help. He called down, **“Don't go anywhere!”**

By this time I think I was about to lose consciousness...

When the hotel staff said:

- Don't panic
- We will send someone to help you real soon!

Although his words didn't take all my fear away... it did help me calm down... because I kept thinking

- (1) You are not alone;
- (2) You are going to be rescued.

These two points are the same two points of the Gospel for today. For as we listen to the Gospel for today from St. Luke we hear this message:

- (1) We are not alone
- (2) We are going to be rescued.

**I. Verse 28 of the Gospel today ends with these 5 words, "The Lord is with you."**

The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told Mary that she was highly favored with God. The 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph tells us that when the angel said that Mary was highly favored with God, Mary was greatly troubled at these words. And then the angel goes on to tell Mary that even though Mary is a virgin she is going to give birth to a son. This is going to be the Son of God. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Remember what Mary questioned. Mary asked: "How will this be?" or in other words,

"I am not ready yet."

- How about you?
- Are you ready to receive God?
- Advent and Christmas are all about receiving God?

And it is not only the 1<sup>st</sup> Coming of Christ that we prepare ourselves, for we are preparing ourselves... for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ?

Are you ready for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and final coming of Christ when the world will be brought to an end, and we will all stand before Christ on Judgment Day? Are you ready for Judgment Day?

**A. Our responses, like Mary, would find us greatly troubled at these words.** For most of us are not ready to receive Christ... at this very moment. The reason:

1. we have sins to confess. We want to get those last minute items done. We need to come clean before God and admit that we have sinned against Him. We have broken God's law and in turn we have broken God's heart.
2. We are not ready... because so often as human beings we have so many line items on our bucket list of getting things done... that we actually let our mind lose focus... and think that we have events or actions to take before we are ready for the Lord to come.
3. We humans... We are so fickle aren't we? We have things we want to do before the Lord comes....

***If this would be where the Gospel lesson for today would end we would find ourselves living in a state of fear... but this is not where the Gospel ends. The Gospel does a full circle and brings us to the second point of our Gospel this morning..***

**II. God has come to rescue us.**

**A.** When Mary was terrified about her future the Gospel tells us that the angel Gabriel said to Mary, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”** Mary would not be alone, the Holy Spirit would work this great miracle in her.

**B.** As we prepare for our salvation, we are not alone. God has planted the gift of the Holy Spirit in each one of our hearts. In our Holy Baptisms we are given the gift of God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit has worked the miracle of faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know that the Holy Spirit works in us? The angel Gabriel said, **“Nothing is impossible with God.”**

III. Mary's final words in the Gospel should also be our words: **"I am the Lord's Servant. May it be to me as you have said."**

Whatever your future holds!!!!

Remember this... you are not alone... and you are going to be rescued... you are going to be saved.

As we approach the final 24 hours before Christmas Day... with all the stress and rush that occurs during this Holy Season...

I would invite you to lift up your thoughts to the heavens

... we are preparing for something much more lofty than a mere earthly celebration

... we are preparing to be one with Jesus Christ.

Whatever fears, concerns, or anxiety you might have... offer them to our Lord and await His holy healing.

And remember... we are just moments away from celebrating the birth of ...

**The Son of God.**

Amen.

Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Nicene Creed