

Devotion, First Week of Christmastide, 2022

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” Luke 2:7

The people have waited for over 400 years, and here is this Savior – not a warrior king, but a newborn baby, lying in a cattle feeding trough in a city miles from his family’s dwelling. The angel has come, the shepherds have come, and the wise men are on the way. There is joy and light and awe everywhere around this little place in Bethlehem. The expected has happened, but it is also unexpected.

Henri Nouwen says “The paradox of expectation indeed is that those who believe in tomorrow can better live today, that those who expect joy to come out of sadness can discover the beginnings of a new life in the center of the old, that those who look forward to the returning Lord can discover him already in their midst.”

Emmanuel has come, and yet Emmanuel has always been with us. We are already living in God’s presence, and we are already filled with God’s glory. And yet, on Christmas day, God is new and special. Those who met Jesus were able to experience God in the flesh. 1 John says that “We have heard...we have seen with our eyes...we have looked at and touched with our hands.”

On Christmas day, I wonder what Mary and Joseph thought as they looked at this newborn child. They knew from the promise of the angels that this child was to be the Messiah, but did they know what that meant? How could this tiny baby be a Messiah? And yet, they were surrounded by visitors who came to worship this child. God’s promise had come to poor shepherds and magi - Zoroastrian priests of the ancient Medes and Persians. Angels seemed to be everywhere. This child was obviously something special – and a gift from God. Luke tells us that “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

Today, we continue to treasure these things and ponder them in our hearts. As we read about Jesus growing up and beginning his ministry, we are reminded that his life is the framework for our lives. He is the lens through which we have meaning and direction. Jesus’ story is the example of what our stories should strive for.

Let us celebrate this week the inbreaking of God’s kingdom into our lives through this holy child.

Jeanne