

“SIGNS AND SEASONS: ARE YOU PREGNANT?”

Advent 4B

December 21, 2014
(8:45 only)

Peace Lutheran
Grass Valley, CA

TODAY'S CARTOON:

Pastor Tony is walking down the street on Christmas eve when he notices a Larry, a small boy, trying to press the doorbell of a house across the street. However, Larry is very small and the doorbell is too high for him to reach. After watching the boy's efforts for some time, Pastor Tony moves closer to Larry's position. He steps smartly across the street, walks up behind the little fellow and, placing his hand kindly on the child's shoulder, leans over and gives the doorbell a solid ring.

Crouching down to Larry's level, Pastor Tony smiles benevolently and asks, 'And now what, my little man?'

To which Larry replies with a beaming grin, 'Now we run!'

MESSAGE TEACHING POINTS:

1. Thinking about pregnancy.
2. What about our pregnancy? Are you pregnant with God? Has God gotten inside of you?
3. Like the grandfather clock, God wants to get inside us and set things right, make the impossible possible.
4. The Second Samuel lesson is about how God wants to establish God's self in side of us.
5. We don't want to let God get that close. God needs to get that close to work, to save and to come into reality.
6. How can I be a handmaid? How can I be pregnant with God?

Along my drive the other day, I got to thinking that it will soon be 9 months since we packed up all our possessions and relocated to California. The thought sort of caught me off guard. It is hard to believe. Time has gone by pretty fast. These months have been full of God's grace and now the wonder of Christmas with you!

Then in a rather whimsical random thought it occurred to me that speaking in pregnancy language, we are almost full term.

Are you following? If this were pregnancy, we'd be about ready to deliver. In my whimsical random way of thinking I came to the conclusion that if I took this "pregnancy" issue seriously, I should be about ready to deliver God — to birth God anew into the world.

That led me to ask, "Am I pregnant?" "Am I a handmaid of God?" "Is God so real and alive in me that God is ready to spring forth?" "Has God gotten inside me?"

How about you? Are you pregnant with God? Is the good news of God's love bursting inside you? Has God gotten close to you?

Here in this last weekend before Christmas, we hear about Mary. We hear the angel's announcement that she will bear a son, who will be called Jesus. Luke is the only one who tells this story, and had we read it in the proper progression we would have read it 9 months ago.

Never-the less, here's Mary. A young woman. A virgin. An engaged young woman with all her hopes and dreams ahead of her. We don't know anything about her other than a few basic facts — a Nazarene, engaged to Joseph, a man with the right pedigree and background — in David's line. A relative of a priest, Zechariah, and his wife Elizabeth. And one who had found favor with God. Why? How? We don't know.

What we do know is that Mary was willing to let God work in her. We do know that Mary was willing to set aside all the hardships that lay ahead so that God could make the impossible possible. So that God could get close to her. So that God could, in fact, work inside her so that she might give birth to the Savior of the world, Jesus.

Mary was willing to let the impossible be possible. She was willing to let God get close, to get so close that God worked inside her to be able to birth the savior.

Think with me for a minute about what this angel's visit really meant to this young woman's future. The huge — beyond our imagination huge — disgrace of being pregnant — and Joseph wouldn't even be the "father." Outcast from family, community. How would Joseph react? How could she provide for herself and her child should Joseph reject her? Could she even survive the pregnancy and birth alone? It was all so utterly impossible.

In spite of all of that, Mary's innocent question was, "How can this be?" That's not likely what any of us would have said. And after assurances, "with God nothing will be impossible." Mary agreed to be used, to be the handmaid of God. She was willing to let God get close enough to her to use her to birth the Savior — to make the impossible possible — for her birth and for the world's salvation.

The story is told about a man who had an old grandfather clock. He had it in his front room window, facing the street — of all things. It was a rather prominent

landmark, and the time was so accurate that people could be seen stopping each day and setting their watches to the old man's grandfather clock.

What the general public did not know was that the grandfather clock faithfully lost 2 to 3 minutes of time each day. Nor did they know that the old man faithfully arose before sunrise to turn the clock around, open the clock's door and reset the clock to the precise time.

This process went on for several years. It went on, in fact, until someone came to the old man and suggested the obvious. Instead of daily resetting the clock to the correct time, why didn't he just take it and have the insides adjusted so that it kept the right time on its own.

Isn't that what our pregnancy is about? It is about God getting inside of us. It is about God coming inside to set things straight. It is about a God who isn't interested in the cosmetic external things, but interested in the insides. It's about a God who wants to move and work in us, to use us as handmaids and hand servants to bring hope to the world. It is about a God who is mostly interested in making the impossible possible.

That's the message behind the dialogue between God and Nathan and David in the other reading today. David wanted to make a temple for God. David wanted to take God out of the "tent of meeting" — which was always erected in the center of the people, in the middle of the people when they settled. David wanted to put God in a permanent place — maybe even a place apart.

God didn't want to have anything to do with that. God wants to be among God's people. God wants to live close to God's people. God wants God's throne to be inside of folks, in the lineage of God's people from David forward. God's dream and God's promise with David is that God will reign through people.

You see, though, I wonder if most of the time we aren't willing to let God get that close. Most of the time we aren't willing to let God come and dwell with us. Much of the time, I fear, we aren't willing to let our lives be the Throne of God. We don't want God inside because God there God sets things "too" right. God gets too close.

Maybe we're just fearful that God will demand too much of us. Perhaps we aren't so comfortable with being growing disciples. Maybe we don't like the idea of this pregnancy — having God with us to be born in us, through us and from us in every moment and aspect of our lives.

This week it is for our consideration: In what ways can I be pregnant with God? How am I coming in letting God be in me, to change me, to set me right, to be at work in my spirit? How am I doing at being the hand servant of God, my God who works to make the impossible possible — even to fix my life, set me straight with the world and thereby shine as a light for the world.

"If nothing is too hard for God, then why am I so slow to move forward in faith?"

Amen.