

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2020

Peace

The Angels' Candle

Scripture Reading:

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

⁷ After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.”

³ Nathan replied to the king, “Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.”

⁴ But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

⁵ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’”

⁸ “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Reflection:

Peace had come to Israel through the war efforts of King David. David then turned his focus from physical security to spiritual security. He expressed this goal by planning to build a temple for the worship of God. This would do several things for David. It would bring the worship of the people to Jerusalem. It would solidify his legacy. But more importantly, it would express his devotion to the one true God of the universe.

God had different plans for David. God did not need a temple to dwell in the midst of His people. God’s presence is everywhere all the time. God never leaves nor forsakes His people. Rather than David build a house for God, which is really impossible to do, God would build a house for David. David was thinking in literal terms, but God was speaking in spiritual terms. The house would be of the greatest heritage of all. The house would be an eternal lineage. The throne of David would last forever. What a trade. David did not need to build a temple but God in His grace would make David’s throne last forever.

David had no idea at the time what that meant. Only when Jesus came did people begin to realize that David’s lineage is continued forever through Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The house that God built was a new family with a new heritage. All who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are adopted into this new family and become God’s children. All people would be welcomed in this new family, no matter their background or nationality. Abraham started all this because he was a man of faith. We become children of Abraham and part of this great family heritage by faith in Jesus.

God worked to bring this all about through a special young woman named Mary. Luke 1:26-38 records the angel’s announcement to Mary of the birth of the King. Mary was highly favored by God and the Lord was with her. We do not need to venerate Mary, make her a patron saint, or pray to her. We have one mediator between God and humanity: the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not need the protection of people of history because we have the protection of the Son of God.

Luke records the song of Mary when she praises God for the special privilege she received to bear the Son of God. Who can experience God’s salvation? Luke 1:50 says those who fear God. Fear and worship go together. And then

v. 52 says the humble. We must beware of the basic human problem is pride mentioned in v. 51. The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of promises made long ago to Abraham. God would bless Abraham and give him descendants as numerous as the sands of the seashore. We are part of those descendants by faith.

Who is this Jesus? Luke 1:31 tells us his name: Savior. He is the Son of the Most High. He will sit forever on the throne of David and be the ruler of the new Israel, which will be an eternal kingdom. The words to Abraham and David were fulfilled.

Romans 16 reminds us that we can be firmly established in this new family, without a doubt. God made promises long ago that have been fulfilled. We have this salvation available to us now. Thanks be unto God for His indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15)!

Prayer:

1. Thank God for the privilege of being part of His family and heritage. Marvel at God’s promises found in these passages of Scripture.
2. If you have some doubt, struggle, or fear this Christmas week, confess this to God and allow the Holy Spirit to bring peace to you.
3. Rest in God’s peace for a few minutes, emptying your mind and heart of the stress and breathing out the spiritual poisons that hold you down and breathing in the Breath of Life of God’s very presence.
4. Ask God to lay a name on your mind today of someone who is struggling, needs a hand, extra love, or does not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Pray for this person. Ask God what He would have you do in this situation. Be willing to obey as God leads.
5. Decide that this week will be a different Christmas because you are looking for coming of the King of kings. How will you respond to God’s voice in your life today?