

Sermon – Friday, December 24, 2021 – Christmas Eve

Rev. Randi

Mary and Joseph were an extraordinary couple. Both were descendants of King David, Israel's greatest king. And Mary was to bear the Christ.

However, Mary and Joseph were also an ordinary couple. We can probably identify with them. Many of us have had the experience of expecting a child and needing to travel a great distance. Today, we might go by plane, which is a little easier than walking. But, we would still have some challenging experiences flying while pregnant. Imagine having to remove your shoes from your swollen feet to go through airport security, for example. Having to wear a mask and worry about COVID is another challenge, especially for a nine-month pregnant woman.

We may have even experienced traveling when we had difficulty finding a room. Perhaps it's homecoming weekend at our college, and all the rooms in town are taken, and we have to stay several miles out. Or maybe we are driving and become tired, but the motel nearby has no vacancy. Even if we've never had the experience of not finding a hotel room, we've all experienced being in a place where we feel there's no room for us. The third person tagging along with an engaged couple, for example, or the new kid in a small high school where everyone else knows each other.

We've also had the experience of being counted as part of a census and then the ultimate follow-up experience, having to pay taxes.

So, we can identify with Mary and Joseph as they travel – Mary late in her pregnancy, Joseph trying to keep them all safe. Their journey was likely difficult and stressful. By the time they reached Bethlehem, they must have been exhausted. Mary might even have been in the early stages of labor. They may have been afraid and discouraged.

Yet into this ordinary life with its challenges and discouragements, Jesus is born. Hope comes into this challenging world. The light comes into the darkness. We experience a sense of hope anytime we see the miracle of birth. Yet this birth, though ordinary, is at the same time extraordinary. This baby fulfills a promise God made to people centuries before.

From the time God forced humanity from the Garden of Eden, God had ceased to physically walk on earth among humankind. Until Jesus. When the baby Jesus takes his first steps, he fulfills the promise recorded in Leviticus. "And I will walk among you, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people."

From the time of the first sin in the Garden of Eden, human sin caused a separation from God that, for centuries, could only be reconciled through animal sacrifice. Until Jesus. But on this day is born a Savior, Christ the Lord.

From the time humanity was forced to earn their living through the sweat of their brow, people had toiled and struggled with only prophecies of a better day. Until Jesus. "Glory

to God in the highest and on earth peace.” We still work and struggle, as Mary and Joseph did, but if we let ourselves claim it, we now have an inner peace that comes from knowing that Jesus is with us and in us. We now always belong – there’s always room for us in God’s kingdom -- because of Jesus.

Like Mary and Joseph, we are ordinary people living ordinary lives. We struggle. We are sometimes afraid. We are sometimes discouraged. Yet we rejoice, just as the Mary and Joseph rejoiced and the shepherds rejoiced because of the extraordinary birth of Jesus. Jesus is the light in the darkness. Jesus is God among us. Jesus reconciles us to God no matter what we do. Jesus brings us inner peace and peace with others if we’re willing.

Jesus has come. Jesus is here. Our ordinary lives are filled with the extraordinary presence of God.

Joy to the world. The Lord is come.