

Lessons and Carols Scriptures
Pollocksville Presbyterian Church
Advent 4
41st Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic
12.20.20

Some thoughts to consider before reading the passages:

- 1. If these verses are familiar to you, imagine reading and hearing them for the first time**
- 2. Discover a thread that connects each of these readings**
- 3. Think about these words in the context of December 1918, following World War I**
- 4. Think about these words in your own contexts**
- 5. Think about these words as the entire human family has faced 2020**

Genesis 3:8-19

8 During that day's cool evening breeze, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God in the middle of the garden's trees. **9** The Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 The man replied, "I heard your sound in the garden; I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."

11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?"

12 The man said, "The woman you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

13 The Lord God said to the woman, "What have you done?!"

And the woman said, "The snake tricked me, and I ate."

14 The Lord God said to the snake,

"Because you did this,

you are the one cursed

out of all the farm animals,

out of all the wild animals.

On your belly you will crawl,

and dust you will eat

every day of your life.

15 I will put contempt

between you and the woman,

between your offspring and hers.

They will strike your head,

but you will strike at their heels."

16 To the woman he said,
“I will make your pregnancy very painful;
in pain you will bear children.

You will desire your husband,
but he will rule over you.”

17 To the man he said, “Because you listened to your wife’s voice and you ate from the tree that I commanded, ‘Don’t eat from it,’
cursed is the fertile land because of you;
in pain you will eat from it
every day of your life.

18 Weeds and thistles will grow for you,
even as you eat the field’s plants;

19 by the sweat of your face you will eat bread—
until you return to the fertile land,
since from it you were taken;
you are soil,
to the soil you will return.”

Genesis 22:15-18

15 The Lord’s messenger called out to Abraham from heaven a second time **16** and said, “I give my word as the Lord that because you did this and didn’t hold back your son, your only son, **17** I will bless you richly and I will give you countless descendants, as many as the stars in the sky and as the grains of sand on the seashore. They will conquer their enemies’ cities. **18** All the nations of the earth will be blessed because of your descendants, because you obeyed me.”

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

6 A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.

He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be vast authority and endless peace
for David’s throne and for his kingdom,
establishing and sustaining it
with justice and righteousness
now and forever.

Isaiah 11:1-4a, 6-9

- 1** A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse;
a branch will sprout from his roots.
- 2** The Lord's spirit will rest upon him,
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of planning and strength,
a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.
- 3** He will delight in fearing the Lord.
He won't judge by appearances,
nor decide by hearsay.
- 4** He will judge the needy with righteousness,
and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land.
- 6** The wolf will live with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;
the calf and the young lion will feed together,
and a little child will lead them.
- 7** The cow and the bear will graze.
Their young will lie down together,
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.
- 8** A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.
- 9** They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,
just as the water covers the sea.

Luke 1:26-35, 38

26 When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee,
27 to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary.**28** When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!"
29 She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. **31** Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. **33** He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I haven’t had sexual relations with a man?”

35 The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son.

38 Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

Luke 2:1-7

1 In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. **2** This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. **3** Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. **4** Since Joseph belonged to David’s house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David’s city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. **5** He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. **6** While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. **7** She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

Luke 2:8-16

8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. **9** The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 The angel said, “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. **11** Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. **12** This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.” **13** Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, **14** “Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.”

15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” **16** They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

Matthew 2:1-11

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. **2** They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

3 When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. **4** He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. **5** They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

6 *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,*

by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,

because from you will come one who governs,

who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." **9** When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. **11** They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word

and the Word was with God

and the Word was God.

2 The Word was with God in the beginning.

3 Everything came into being through the Word,

and without the Word

nothing came into being.

What came into being

4 through the Word was life,

and the life was the light for all people.

5 The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

6 A man named John was sent from God. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light.**8** He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

9 The true light that shines on all people

was coming into the world.

10 The light was in the world,

and the world came into being through the light,

but the world didn't recognize the light.

11 The light came to his own people,

and his own people didn't welcome him.

12 But those who did welcome him,

those who believed in his name,

he authorized to become God's children,

13 born not from blood

nor from human desire or passion,

but born from God.

14 The Word became flesh

and made his home among us.

We have seen his glory,

glory like that of a father's only son,

full of grace and truth.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Questions to Consider

- 1. What initial reactions come to you after reading and hearing these words?**
- 2. What was/were the thread(s) you noticed in these scriptures?**
- 3. In his Christmas message from Union Presbyterian Seminary, Dr. Brian Blount quotes Luke 2:8-10 and says that “God had just invaded [the shepherds’] world with hope, with joy, with possibility, and with love.”¹ What would that have meant for the world in December 1918? What about the world in 2020? What about in your own circumstances?**
- 4. If you were to retell the scriptures read today in one sentence, what would that be?**

¹https://www.youtube.com/watch?mc_cid=36eefc38ba&mc_eid=3aa69ec97b&v=lKgDHuTAaWs&feature=youtu.be