

Sunday, December 23, 2018

Micah 5:2-5

Luke 1:39-46

### Good News: Christ Will Come!

Have you heard this story? Recently some homeowners in Nova Scotia thought they had been robbed but got a happy surprise instead. Their house was cleaned for free by cleaners who went to the wrong address. An observant neighbour saw two women going into the house with a vacuum cleaner and mop. The door had been left unlocked so that another neighbour could walk the owner's dog. The homeowner then called the police about two suspicious women. Upon arrival the truth became known—the women had taken nothing but left behind a clean house. Police tracked down one of the cleaners later that day and she confirmed their mistake. She was very apologetic that they got the wrong house so the matter has been solved and everyone's happy. The police was not sure whether the correct house ever got cleaned. An honest mistake was made, the homeowner had a clean house and no charges were laid.

Sometimes when we hear good news stories we just want to hear more because the news seems to be filled with bad news all the time—with murders, stealing, legal cases or wrong doings, family squabbles, Yet we also know that people are not necessarily wanting to hear the good news- but just what been happening in the neighbourhoods.

The prophet Micah wrote about difficult times facing the people of Israel and how battles were always occurring in order to defend and keep the land for the people. He writes, "Marshal your troops for siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on a cheek with a rod." Micah's prophecy warns the people that there will be an attack on its people and that they are to be ready to defend themselves.

This sounds like the news from today as people are warned to be ready in case they need to defend themselves Military personnel stationed around the world need to be ready in case of a political fallout or indiscretion.

But what Micah writes next prophesizes the role in which Bethlehem will pray in the days which follow even though it actually occurred hundreds of years later. Even though the community of Bethlehem Ephrathah is small in comparison to other communities in Judah, it is from this community that there will be one who will come and this person will rule over Israel. They will have strong connections to the past as their origin is old but this person will change the future.

This is a prophecy of Jesus' birth. There will come a woman who will deliver a baby and eventually his brothers will join together. And at that time Israel would abandon this region until the time when she who is in labour gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

As Micah writes and shares this, this is good news. But who is Micah speaking about? Jesus the one who will stand and shepherd his flock in God's strength, and also with majesty in the name of the Lord God. This one who is to be born will enable people to live securely because his greatness will be known worldwide and he will be their peace.

His greatness will be known worldwide. We have to remember that when Micah was writing, they did not know how big the world was. Yet in faith, we need to ask, does everyone know how great Jesus is, that is the One who was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah? The one who would stand up and shepherd his people in the name of God?

We might question this knowing even today? Does everyone really 'know' about Jesus' greatness? Do we understand the depth of his love and reason for coming and living in human history? Do we fully realize that Micah knew Jesus' purpose in bringing peace to all people hundreds of years before it was shared? What do we do about this?

There are different options 1) shout it out loud and tell others 2) tell others in a passive way or 3) do nothing at all.

As we read about Mary's visit with her older relative, Elizabeth we cannot help but to be moved to understand the joy that both of these women feel at being chosen to carry the two individuals who will lead and transform the world. Elizabeth was the mother of John the Baptist who preached his message of salvation and baptized many people in the name of the one who was to follow him and did. Mary is Jesus' mother and when she meets Elizabeth they are filled with the Holy Spirit. The joy they must have felt- Mary as a young woman ready to be married to Joseph, and Elizabeth well along in years and unable to conceive a child are told of their pregnancies through angels. For it is by God these women can rejoice together when they visit. They were ordinary people, faithful to God in how they lived and they were chosen to bear John and Jesus. The love they had for God was immense, the love they shared as faithful women- sisters in God was overwhelming for each were filled with joy. Elizabeth expressed her thoughts, "Why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" How did she know about the Lord who was to come and that Mary was carrying the child? They are so filled with love for these unborn babies! They are almost jumping up and down with excitement.

Then Mary shares the song which has become known as the Magnificat—a song from her heart as she tries to explain what she is feeling and thinking. Mary's song is filled with praise to God because God knew her and called her to this special task. She realizes that everyone will know her and bless her for God has done something amazing- he has extended his love- unconditional love to all who fear and adore him too. God has done some amazing things- scattering those who do not believe and follow His teachings, he has overruled those in power, he has filled the needs of his people with food and the rich who seek him are sent away. God has given Mary and Elizabeth the ability to love others. Mary's song also states, he helped Israel through the generations and God will remember her because God kept his promise to Abraham. Mary's song is a song of good news=because it is a reflection of her faith as she accepts the task of being Jesus' birth mother and to raise this child in the faith is a job that will be tough because Jesus is the one who was to come and save his people. Only in time would Mary fully understand what Jesus had to do but in the meantime, she and Elizabeth praised God and loved God for granting them the babies which they carried.

Where are you looking for the Good News this Christmas? Is it in a song, a movie, a scripture reading? Or what you are looking for already in your heart and it needs to be awakened and brought alive again? What does it mean to truly know this love- born in a stable yet shared amongst family and friends through faith this year.

Maybe this is difficult to accept- but this is the Good News- Jesus was born because of the love Mary had for God and the commitment and responsibility she had accepted. God loved and loves us so much that we are still keeping that hope, peace and joy in our hearts and passing it on to the next generation—but will they pick it up or throw it away along with empty wrapping paper?

How are you responding to the Good News: Jesus will come? Are you arms ready to receive the infant king, or outstretched with hope? Is your heart open or closed- to receive the Spirit's peace upon you and bless you or are you caught up in the doing and getting/buying of this season? Are you excited and filled with joy as you praise God's name? Is your heart ready to share the love you have been blessed with? Are you willing to talk about the Good News of Jesus Christ our Saviour?

Taste and see that God is good- Come and share in the sacrament of communion and remember Jesus- not only as the baby in the manger but as the Christ on the cross and the Messiah of the empty tomb. Come to Christ and know him and experience the Good News he brings. Filled with comfort and joy for all people. Come and experience the love of Christ as we share with one another! Amen.