

Sermon Text for November 29, 2015

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Isaiah 7:10-17:, Luke 1:26-38

“The Annunciation”

Today is the first Sunday in Advent and our theme is Jesus is our hope. Jesus is our hope. A great definition for hope is the expectation of a favorable future under God’s direction. In modern speech hope is expecting that something good is right around the corner. Or as Tony Campolo loves saying: It’s Friday, but Sundays a coming. That’s a great definition. So if you are a hopeful person then you don’t expect the bad, you don’t always see the worst case scenario but rather you expect good to happen in your life. Advent is the season of expectancy when we are waiting for our coming Savior. It is the season when we realize that we still have a lot of work to do before the Savior comes to prepare this earth for his coming. Let’s read a Scripture where we find a message of hope, we find a message where an angel promises a young girl that good things are right around the corner.

For Advent this year we are out of Genesis and into the Gospel of Luke, for the entire season. And one of the primary protagonists, in fact she is mentioned more than any other person in Scripture through the first two chapters of Luke, is Mary. We don’t normally see Mary as a young girl, maybe 13 or 14, or even 11 or 12. So for every Sunday I want you to get to know Julia Barge/Grace Hess who was born into this church and baptized in this church and some of us may be a little out of touch with what a normal young woman is like, so we are going to be having an interview with Julia/Grace every Sunday right around this time. Just to remind us of what Mary might have been like. A young girl growing up in the sleepy little town of Nazareth.

Tell us a little bit about yourself

Name

Age

School and grade

Family

Where you live

What are some of your favorite activities?

What do you hope to get for Christmas?

As we were preparing for this series I spoke about the annunciation to the group and someone said, Oh, I thought it was called that because the angel told Mary the news Mary said: “What? I didn’t understand what you said.” Get it, the enunciation.

We will then see her glorify the Lord after the birth of John the Baptist in the magnificat. We will see her visited by the shepherds, and finally we will see her take her baby into the temple. Even though she is going to be front and center in all of these events in Luke, she is still not the center of the focus. Jesus is.

We are actually starting today a series on Advent in Luke, and the reason I chose the Gospel of Luke for our Advent series is that it contains the most detailed information regarding the birth of our Savior than any other Gospel. Look at Luke 1:1 and 3 where the author states that the purpose of his writing is to give an orderly account of all that has taken place.

Before we hear that Jesus was born we get 80 verses of preparation, of setting the stage so that we are ready when he is born to understand who exactly who this Jesus the Christ is.

Here is a picture in art history that depicts the annunciation over time. You see the Angel speaking, Mary in a position of receiving, the dove which represents the Holy Spirit being present in the midst of all of this.

Today it is all about hope. Hope is expecting good things right around the corner. If there is somebody in Scripture who did not expect anything good within the very near future it would have to be Mary before the angel Gabriel, which means hero of God by the way, comes and greets her. She is an unwed young pregnant teen who was facing almost certain death because of the Jewish laws of that time that required her to be taken to the center square and stoned to death. The only thing she saw coming around the corner of her young life was almost certain doom.

I think of the kids who come to the well and spend so much time here. It isn’t just for the snacks. I wonder what it must be like out in the world if they choose to spend their day in a place, maybe the only place, that provides some hope, that provides some people who actually believe in them and think they can do something in their lives.

But Gabriel, this hero of God, comes to her and states: “you will bear a son and his name will be Jesus, God saves, and of his kingdom will be no end.” This is the message of hope that Gabriel gives to Mary. Listen I know that the situation in which you find yourself may look dim, but good things are right around the corner. When Mary

comes back to Gabriel and responds, but how is this going to happen? He responds with the words that have brought hope to people for two thousand years: nothing will be impossible with God.

Time and time again we find in Scripture when people are anticipating a future that is without hope this message of expect good things to happen soon. Abraham and Sara are assured that all things are possible with God and she laughs, until she conceives and bears a son named Isaac. In our Old Testament reading for today the Israelites are in slavery, in exile in Babylon, some of the darkest hopeless days in their history when we hear the words of Isaiah that states: the sign that the Messiah is at hand, is that this young girls will bear a child. Isaiah is telling his people, you can expect good things right around the corner.

What are some of the situations in you life now that you need to hear like Mary did: expect good things to be coming right around the corner. What are you facing that maybe you think is hopeless and you need to hear again: nothing is impossible with God. Maybe your job is tenuous, put it before Christ as Mary did by saying here I am a servant of the Lord and expect good things to happen in the future. Maybe the future of your child is creating anxiety within your life: expect good things coming around the corner through Christ. Maybe your health or your spouse's health has you worried, look to Scripture and see how our history is one of putting our trust in God who is our hope. When we are in situations of despair and hopelessness what better news can we receive than that good things are coming down the road. Just hang in there help is on the way. Since we are promised that in Scripture I can assure you that it is true.

You know this Scripture has often been interpreted through Mary or Gabriel as the focus point. But in reality this Scripture is focused on Jesus. Jesus, she is told, will be Holy, will be set apart. Jesus Christ turned out to be the hope for Mary because through him she was saved from death. Brothers and sisters we, like Mary, find our hope in Christ because through him we are saved from death and in him we find eternal life. In Christ we find hope because we can be certain with Scripture that all things work out for the good for those who believe in God. Even the impossible situations work out because after all as the angel Gabriel stated: is anything impossible through God? Absolutely not, because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

We have said that hope is the expectation of the good things to come. As the church universal I believe that we are living in an age of hope. We are living in a time

when the world is calling out for hope, someone or something that brings a promise. But our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I expect so many good things to come from us in the years to come. I hope, I expect our ministry to intensify and multiply if we decide that it is through the bride of Christ that hope is able to enter this community. I know even better things are right around the corner. I hope, I expect to be able to reach out in love and concern as we work together as the salt of this earth. Good things are right around the corner. I hope, I expect good things to be happening around us through this church because our desire to see every person reached with the love of Jesus Christ. Hope is in essence, vision. If you have hope, then you have a vision for a good future. If you are without hope, then you have no vision.

It is in the annunciation, where a young girl is approached by a messenger of the Lord with news that would change her life and change the world, where we are overcome with the message of hope that one person at a time can transform people around us. Let it happen.

Amen.