

The Value of Hindsight

WEEK ONE

4 WEEKS NOTES

-First in terms of understanding Jesus – that who it was as the Christ as the revelation of God was revealed over the course of his life to those around him.

-During these months of *Ordinary Time*, we too have had a close up of Jesus the teacher, healer, friend, compassion, granting forgiveness, etc. important not to forget where we have been during the past months in our gospels.

- It was looking back that only then the Jew and Gentiles who later became Christians realized that the humble impoverished beginning is where God chose to reveal the divine self in human form – that hindsight grants a glance of the radicality of the divine plan.

-In the gospel this first week Jesus is positioned at the end of his ministry inviting to us look back

-And hindsight not only about him but also about our lives – What are the gifts that Paul talks about given to each of us in order to be of Christ, having recognized him?

We have a Waiting Problem

-Waiting problem – talk about some examples when you have to wait – could even walk about the church if you do that kind of preaching and ask different people what they waited for in the past 24 hrs. during waiting, we get bored, anxious, irritated, mindless, worried, impatient

-Focusing on the gospel – Jesus' parable about himself – a master that sets out from his home and leaves his servants in charge of tasks. To be in readiness when he returns he cautions them to stay awake, be waiting after they have done what they were commissioned to do, they have taken care of whom or what they have responsibility. Awake, watchful, WAIT!

-What tasks are we being asked to attend to that will make the return of the Master, or the coming of Jesus valuable for those of us who expectantly wait – prepare,

-What can we do with those seconds, or minutes or 15 minutes or half hrs. or wakeful times at night - what can we do with that waiting that will prepare for the Lord's coming?

Advent is More Than About Christmas

-Advent – means the expected arrival of someone, the anticipated appearance of an expected one yet Christ has already come. born in Bethlehem, entered our humanity as all of us have, as infant

-Half of Advent celebrates with a spirit of beholding and thankfulness for that reality the getting ready for once again the chance to honor and celebrate the arrival/birth of Jesus from the past.

-But 50% of Advent calls us to examine our lives – and discern if we are living lives that anticipate the return of Christ, another in breaking of Christ that he spoke about in the gospel today. We have hints how he came in the past – in quiet humility, in impoverished beginnings, among the least likely expected to give birth, give life to the incarnation, the inbreaking of God

in humanity – peasants. Do we live lives of expectation of attending to all the ways Christ may be being made manifest now or in an event in the future?

-The Divine Disclosure Latent Here WEEK TWO

-Divine portrait in Is 40 a consoling comforting God who is lifting us up out of this desolation (elaborate, political divisions, world strife, covid, and its resurgence, employment changes, climate crises etc.)

-Promising not just liberation or relief from the tribulations but promising God’s very self. “here is your God”

-even the 2Peter reading assures of God’s coming (likely talking about the future coming but waiting till as many people as possible are ready to receive the Holy One.)

-Today’s Gospel presents the first lines of Mark’s Gospel – doesn’t waste any time making clear where and who that God is – instead he writes “The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . .” Jesus is the manifestation of God

-Incarnation is the great faith Revelation/Disclosure of this season of Christmas –

That Jesus who is one with God came and showed us what humans can be like AND what God is like. _the comforter, the healer, the friend, the lover, the one who lifts up the lowly, who elevates the poor, restores well-being, who doesn’t take account of race, gender, ethnicity or social status. . This is the God Jesus reveals through incarnation and this is the humanity of which he reveals we are capable.

Do we grasp the unfathomable nature of Incarnation and can we spend some time reflecting on this Mystery of our faith?

Prepare!!! Ready or Not!

Gospel – makes clear this is the time of preparation “prepare a way for the LORD” What does that preparation look like? What do we need to do to behold that God in human form came and walk upon this earth on which we walk

John wants the people to prepare by a baptism of repentance – the practice in Judaism – so part of our preparation during Advent requires a self-examination, and then be about the work of repentance (mending relationships, being more patient, listening better, taking time to prayerfully meditate on the Advent mysteries., etc.)

Isaiah reading –makes clear that as we have repented our waywardness, God has already embraced us with comfort and healing.

And the Peter reading again assures us that God's coming to us will be one where the divine will wait until most all of us have turned toward Jesus.

John the Baptist as Hint of to Whom He Witnesses WEEK 3

-while Mark gives no nativity stories, he gives us JB- as an indication of who is coming

-JB man of minimal means

-could not be bought by pleasures

-speaks to authorities (Levites, priests, Pharisees) yet claims no authority they wish him to possess

-is clear about who is not – not the Christ, not Elijah, not a prophet

-but a witness to the one who is coming

OT text Isaiah 60 – give further indication of one coming – a servant, who will bring glad tidings to the poor
to heal the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners,
to announce a year of favor from the LORD

Though JB denies he is a prophet – he certainly stands in the tradition of OT prophets and 1 Thess seems to recognize that as Paul tells us

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise prophetic utterances.

Finally the respons Ps – has us pray the Magnificat with its images of uplifting the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, sending rich away empty

Message – as John and our readings all witness to the character of the one who is coming, does our witness also match the one who is coming. ?

Reflection on the Wilderness

John the Baptist is not in town or in the synagogue but in the wilderness and people from all over Judea are flocking to him, believing him, doing what he advised, receiving a baptism of repentance. Wilderness is a barren place, its isolating, deafening silence, one there is steeped in aloneness, yet many encounters with God in the Scriptures begin in the wilderness Moses and

the people escape from Egypt sets them in the wilderness and encounter God at Sinai, Elijah escapes Jezebel's threat and ends up in the wilderness encountering God at Horeb, our Isaiah text suggests God prepared a way in the wilderness for the exiles in Babylon to return and meet God in the process. Why the wilderness before this great celebration of Christmas?

Given the festivities, holiday preparations, accumulations, busy schedule, decoration, etc associated with this season, there is The risk of missing the profoundly significant reason we celebrate Christmas - the inbreaking of God into our lives - moreover that this inbreaking occurred in impoverished circumstances, involving the least likely of human choices – peasants from Nazareth, Mary and Joseph, individuals of no special notarity, with no humanly appointed sovereign authority, who were vulnerable, whose lot in life was humble

John seeks to prepare them to prepare us to expect the unexpected.

We must establish a wilderness experience for ourselves during these Advent days, some space or place we go to frequently, daily to prepare ourselves for what is communicated, what is made concrete, what is manifest by this event – i.e. God's inbreaking into our human existence,

John as a model of dependency upon God a model of unself sufficiency

-A Pregnant Yes – the Pathway to Incarnation WEEK FOUR

Who is Mary – a young peasant woman, Roman Sovereignty that eventually destroy the Jewish temple and persecuted Jews (and Christians)

From Nazareth – northern part of Israel area known as Galilee – where ppl who farmed the valleys lived. Many worked the land they did not own Not considered a valuable region in contrast to the south

Why Mary? This young unknown peasant from a less than favorable region of the anct world?

Was the choice of Mary as prelude to who Jesus would be?

Just before the annunciation account in Luke, we hear of the annunciation to Zachariah the high priest working in the temple

that he and his wife of old age will have a son –

also the angel Gabriel appears

like Mary he expresses fear

like Mary the angel G tells him not to fear

like Mary he and Elizabeth will have a son

like Mary he asks how can this be so?

Angel promises that the Holy Spirit will come upon them

Parallel stories of annunciation except in one instance Mary responds be it done unto me according to thy word and Zachariah “how can I be sure of this”

Zachariah the high priest is silenced AND Mary the unknown peasant woman become the proclaimer of the Magnificat.

God becoming human – incarnation depended upon the yes of this unknown peasant woman - and it was likely not a yes all at once but one that with prayer and thought and courage that yielded the Yes. To what do we say yes that brings about others the experience of the divine in our midst? Especially in this holy season?

Denise Levertov's poem the Annunciation

The unprecedented nature of an annunciation to Mary as first disclosure as to who Jesus will be

Romans reading doxology that celebrates the mystery of God's inbreaking as foretold by the prophets

OT reading – David wanting to build a hs – but God wanting to keep it simple after all God reminds him he was shepherd boy in the fields when God called him

Through advent we have heard of centrality of John the Baptist – not messiah, not Elijah not a prophet - no official credibility all his teaching was directed toward another away from himself.

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Solomon gave away twenty cities of upper Galilee in payment to Hiram for gold cedar and cypress to build his temple - people as collateral I Kgs 9

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As the one who says yes to bringing about the word made flesh – probably hardly understanding to what she has agreed

Magnificat – God has looked upon his handmaid, lifted up the lowly, hungry fed with good things, rich sent empty away pulled the powerful down from their thrones lowly are exalted

Mary recognizes her societal place and realizes matters are shifting. The Lord has does great things for her.

All of this is consistent with the gospel that Jesus will preach – blessed are the poor, first last, last first, who he calls to follow him.

This annunciation is about us as well, - no sovereign ones among us, no ones with unbridled credibility, yet we too may being asked to birth Christ in our world. How will we do this?

