

## Message Notes December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### Advent Week 4: Rejoice

(Psalm 12:6, Psalm 25:10, 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:26-38)

#### • “Do You Trust Me?”

- We’ve reached the fourth Sunday of Advent; it’s almost Christmas! We’ve explored a different word each Sunday: so far, we’ve covered, “Prepare,” and “Rejoice.” Today’s word is, *Promise*. And if you talk about “Promise,” you also have to talk about *trust*, because a promise is only good if the promise-maker can be *trusted*.
- How many action-adventure movies have you seen that have that line, “Do you trust me?” The hero reaches out to take the damsel’s hand before they jump to safety. A captain shouts to his crew before they plunge into danger. The leader of a quest asks her companions if they’ll follow her on a perilous journey.
  - I googled this to see what movies use this cliché and one film database came up with over 900 different titles that have the line, “Do you trust me?” Here are a few: *Titanic*, *Blade Runner*, *Twilight*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (yikes!), *National Treasure*, *Aladdin*, *Love Actually*, *Armageddon*, multiple *Star Trek* movies, *Alien*, and *Harry Potter*.
  - “Do you trust me?!”
- Put yourself in one of those adventure-conspiracy type movie scenarios, where the protagonist suddenly gets a mysterious phone call that launches them into a life changing adventure. You know, like the spouse is at home washing the dishes when the partner calls, who’s actually a secret, international-crime-fighting spy, and says, “Honey, listen to me, there’s no time to explain: I need you to pack up everything, get the kids, find the plane tickets and cash I buried under the doghouse in the backyard and meet me in Cambodia in 24 hours! Just trust me!”
- Who do you trust? More than anyone else. Who is someone you’d trust enough that if they made a phone call like that, you’d believe them and drop everything; you’d trust them enough to place your very life in their hands, no matter how outlandish the request?

#### • Mary and Gabriel

- In Luke chapter 1, at the first Advent of our Lord, when the Lord’s messenger, Gabriel, appeared to Mary, it might as well have been one of those action-adventure movies where the heroine gets a message out of nowhere that changes the course of her life. Gabriel could have ended this conversation with, “Do you trust me?” Really, it was implied—*do you trust the One who sent me?*
  - And here’s the amazing thing: with her whole life about to be turned upside down, with so many questions yet to be answered, *Mary trusts the Lord*.
  - This young girl of humble origins, after hearing that she will conceive as a virgin through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, and not only that, but the baby to be born will be *the Promised One*, the *Messiah*, the *Son of God*—this young woman simply responds to the Angel, “I am the Lord’s servant...May your word to me be fulfilled.” A little while later, her elder cousin Elizabeth, says of her, “Blessed is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”
  - We don’t know much about Mary’s backstory, but we know from her actions here that Mary has somehow cultivated a heart of deep faith and profound trust in the Lord—a faith that’s more than just theory, but is ready to respond in action, ready to place her entire life in God’s hands. Maybe this is one of the reasons she found favor with God.
- She has such a trust that, when the Lord comes to her with a life-changing, disruptive initiative, and says, “Do you trust me?” Mary responds without hesitation, “Yes, I trust you.” She trusts the Promise of God.
- How does someone come to trust God *that much?*

#### • The Ancient Promise

- 2,000 years ago, Gabriel gave Mary this promise of God that she would be the mother of the Messiah.

- This promise itself was the fulfilment of a much older promise, a promise given to King David a *thousand years before the birth of Jesus*. As we read from 2 Samuel 7 today, the Lord spoke to David through the prophet Nathan: "...I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth...The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."
- This was the beginning of the Promise that God would develop in His people, for many generations through many prophets, that a great King was coming to rule above all king from the line of David, who would rule over God's people forever and reveal the glory of the Lord to all nations—just as Gabriel said to Mary, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."
- But this promise to David was actually preceded by *another promise*, over *2,000 years* before the life of Christ, and *1,000 years* before David: a humble nomad named Abram: the one in whom this whole family of the Promise began.
  - Genesis 12 says the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
  - Do you hear the question implied again here? "*Do you trust me?*"
- And there's still another promise earlier. There's a promise that goes back further, back to the beginning, longer than we can say, before recorded history: after the great Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the Lord gives a word of judgment and promise in Genesis 2: "...the Lord God said to the serpent, '...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'"
- Even in the murky beginnings of human history, in the wake of humanity's Fall from life in Eden, a mysterious Promise is given that from this man and woman's offspring will come one who will *crush the serpent*.
  - Jesus is the promised serpent-crusher, the descendant of Adam, who will defeat the Enemy. Jesus is the promised blessing to all the peoples, the descendant of Abraham. Jesus is the promised King above all kings to reign forever, the descendant of David. Jesus is the promised one born of the Virgin Mary, the Savior of the World. And yet, He is also the one who was before all things, in whom all things were made, who was slain before the foundations of the world—he is, as Revelation says, both the *root* and the *offspring of David*.
- **The Promise-Maker**
  - From the beginning, God has been making *promises*. Advent hinges on the great *Promises* of God: the promise that Christ would come, which has now happened, and the promise that Christ will come again, for which we are now waiting.
  - God is a *covenant-making God*. The Bible is largely the story of God *making promises* and *fulfilling promises*. It gives us a record of his Covenant Faithfulness so that we can trust the promises that have yet to be fulfilled.
  - You see, when someone makes a covenant with another person, they're basically saying, "You can trust me." When someone makes a true promise, they're putting their life on the line: they're putting their name, their reputation in the balance. "If I break this promise, I break my reputation."
  - Covenants in the Old Testament had literal life-and-death consequences. This is why in the Old Testament times, you didn't "make" a covenant, you "cut" a covenant. That was the expression they used. There was a ritual used when making a covenant where the parties involved would sacrifice animals. And it sounds brutal, but they would cut the sacrifices in half and lay the halves across from one another, creating a path in the middle. The people making the covenant would then walk through this path, sealing this commitment in blood and essentially saying, "If I break my oath, may this happen to me, may I be broken, may my life be forfeit."

- And the amazing thing is, this is the kind of promise God made to Abraham and his descendants. If you read Genesis 15, God has Abram prepare the sacrifices, then he makes Abram fall into a deep sleep and shows him a vision of God cutting this covenant with him, passing through the sacrifices for him, sealing this promise on his behalf. God himself basically says, “I am putting my Name on the line, I swear to you by my own self that I will never break this promise.”
- Even though we break our side of the Covenant repeatedly, He continues to keep it, for God cannot *not* be true to Himself.
- **Trusting the Promise**
  - This is the God we serve. Our God is a promise-maker and our God is a promise-keeper.
    - We have the wonderful advantage of looking back over this whole story and seeing how *every time God makes a promise, God keeps it*. It might have taken generations until the right time came for the next step to be fulfilled, *but God always keeps His promises*.
  - *God always keeps His promises*.
    - Abraham knew this. David knew this. The great prophets of old knew this. Mary and Joseph knew this. Do you?
      - *Do you trust God? Do you live for His promise?*
    - If we’re only looking through the lens of life’s constantly shifting circumstances, the highs and lows and disappointments that come from living out of Eden, it will be hard to develop trust.
    - But God’s promises aren’t dependent on life’s shifting circumstances. God’s promises are dependent on His unchanging nature: God’s promises are based on His very self, His great Name. He never fails to fulfill a promise.
      - And if we wait, we will see His steadfast love and faithfulness.
    - You can look back on this whole story and watch how, generation after generation, God fulfilled His promise. Abraham wasn’t perfect, but He trusted God. David was far from perfect, but He trusted God. Mary wasn’t perfect, but she trusted God. You are not expected to be perfect—you’re just asked to trust God. Have faith in the Promise. “*Do you trust me?*” God says.
      - *Jesus will come again to bring justice and restore all things. Every tear will be wiped away, every source of sorrow and evil will be finished. And we will reign with Him forever. God’s promise.*
  - So, what do we do now? What do we do while we wait?
    - *Trust. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.”* (Proverbs 3:5-6)
    - For, “*...the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times,*” (Psalm 12:6). And, “*All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and decrees,*” (Psalm 25:10).
    - Press on toward the prize. Let the hope of that great promise give you joy, and let the suffering of our present trials produce perseverance.
    - We can trust Him. And if we trust Him, while we wait, we’ll find hope, we’ll find love, we’ll find joy, and we’ll find peace.
  - So, here’s the final question to ponder for this season: *This Advent, how can I deepen my trust in God’s promises?*