

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Dec 22, 2019 – Advent 4 - Love

Magnifying the Lord (Ps 80:1-7 and Luke 1:39-55)



**My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour
on the lowliness of his servant.
(Luke 1:47b-48a)**

Insights from the story within the story

What of primary importance for the Christian perspective on life in this world (and the next) is that God love us – and in that loving mercy and favour, we find our dignity and worth – every one of us – no matter what our circumstances or challenges – we are loved – loved so deeply that the Creator of the universe comes to us in the flesh, as one of us, to bring us home to our true destiny – to be friends with God in the redemption of the creation – and from that gift of reconciliation and restoration arises the rejoicing and magnifying that Mary articulates so eloquently in the Magnificat – one of the most favoured passages in all of the Scriptures – but what does this rejoicing mean for today? – let's be realistic about the context into which this message is being spoken – that's why I chose this recent image from the provocative artist Banksy to use this morning – a traditional creche beneath a wall of separation scarred by a mortar shell – Banksy's title for this image is 'The Scar of Bethlehem'

Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon

- In our conversations this past Friday, Winston, who knows his Bible in much greater detail than I do, noted the echoes of the prophet Isaiah in Mary's song – this is a hymn of rejoicing and thanksgiving for the fulfillment of God's promises that reach back to the covenant with Abraham so all the world can be blessed – and, as Reg pointed out, this is not a God who sits aloof on a throne of judgement, but one who comes to us and walks among us, inviting us to see and act differently – that babe beneath the scars of his world and ours is changing things through the power of love – and the invitation is for all of us – not a coercive command, but a persuasive call – come and participate – like Mary, bear me into this world

- The other point that attracted by attention this week in pondering this passage was who was chosen as the ambassador of the fulfilment of Isaiah's message – the reading on the back of the announcement insert captures that so well – it's a woman, and a young one at that, in a culture that denigrated and dismissed their significance – it's a peasant in a culture that had succumbed to privilege and power – who God chose to bear him in flesh into the world and who God chose to grow up among and work with is important to remember in another culture that has succumbed to privilege and power

How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?

[Pick up the magnifying glass] – I need this thing more and more these days – it amplifies and clarifies – so, our souls magnifying the Lord is not simply a matter of rejoicing, but of representing – of being ambassadors of the purposes of this God whose love led him to be born into the scars of his day – that's what I pray the Spirit provokes you to feel every time you enter this sanctuary – every time you notice the scar of the cross at the front of the church – and every time your attention is drawn to the fact that it is an empty cross – that it's scarring power did not win – that a loving life penetrates the dark walls and barriers built by fear and enlightens the world with its mercy and grace – and we, lowly and frail as we are, are chosen by God in magnify the power of that love

My Notes



My Prayers