

**Summerland United Church
December 15 Advent 3
The Inn: How Much is Enough?**

We Open the Door

For the last couple of weeks we've been considering how we as a community of faith can be like the Inn in the Nativity – how do we become a house for the Holy? And how do we as individuals house the holy within ourselves. Today we'll hear a reading that are full of joy and a reading that begins with trepidation. For any new beginning for anytime we start something new, there is often trepidation, a sense of doubt, a sense of fear – what are we getting into, what's going to happen next? Am I worthy? Am I good enough? And Isaiah will assure us that indeed we are worthy to house the holy. Each and everyone of us. and by accepting this, we will bring about A full life of joy, which the prophet Isaiah describes as an ever-flowing spring, is the birthright of all children of God. May we act to make it so.

First Reading Isaiah 12: 2-6

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning it holds for you on this day.

God is indeed my salvation;
I will trust and won't be afraid.
Yah, the Lord, is my strength and my shield;
he has become my salvation."
You will draw water with joy from the springs of salvation.
And you will say on that day:
"Thank the Lord; call on God's name;
proclaim God's deeds among the peoples;
declare that God's name is exalted.
Sing to the Lord, who has done glorious things;
proclaim this throughout all the earth."
Shout and sing for joy, city of Zion,
because the holy one of Israel is great among you.

Second Reading Luke 1: 26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a young woman pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The woman's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."
²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the

throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a not married?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

There's a children's curriculum called 'Holy Moly' and it's a video series of bible stories done in a cute child like sort of way. They use humor and a bit of silliness to engage children with the stories. In the Holy Moly version of the annunciation – the passage we just heard from the Luke – the angel Gabriel has an air of Monty Python about him, do you know what I mean by that? There is nothing elegant, stately or reserved about this angel. Gabriel is nervous, overweight and his gown barely covers his bottom, so these spindly legs stick out awkwardly.

God, an anthropomorphic hand points to Gabriel from a cloud, tosses him a scroll and then points to Mary down on earth. If memory serves Gabriel doesn't so much fly gracefully to the ground, but rather stumbles and falls gregariously, startling a goat, that is gnawing on a tin can when the angel lands.

Mary is minding her own business, humming softly as she goes about her daily chores, when this gawky angels walks up to her, clears his throat, unrolls the scroll and begins his pronouncement. In Holy Moly, there is no speech, communication happens through gestures and music.

So, this Angel clears his throat and begins to sing – terribly. And Mary – freaks out. She panics and runs away. Because who wouldn't panic if an elegant or gawky angel appeared before them and started proclaiming there were going to parent the Messiah?

So, Mary runs and the angel chases around and around her home in perfect loony tunes fashion until both Mary and the angel are out of breath.

And over the course of the next couple minutes of the show the Angel is able to communicate to her that even though she thinks she's nothing special. She doesn't think she is good enough. But she doesn't get to decide who is good enough. And the very fact that she doesn't think she's good enough is why she is perfectly suited for this task.

She accepts the message from God and in Holy Moly, she sings out her joy beautifully.

I share this version of the annunciation, because I think it encompasses both the trepidation and the joy of this story and because it humanizes Mary.

Mary, the mother of God has been put on such a high pedestal by the church, she seems otherworldly, special and beyond the grasp of our mere and humble humanity.

But that's not how we should understand her, because we are meant to be like her, willing to house the holy, willing to be a part of the birth of Jesus every year. If we deify her, insist she was extra special perfect – we have no hope of ever emulating her.

She was just a girl. And ordinary human being, living a life that wasn't particularly special. She had plans to marry, raise a child, live an ordinary life. And it is because, I believe anyway, that she was this everyday human being that God chose her. God could have chosen any ordinary human being to do something extraordinary – because that is what God does. Everyday ordinary human beings have the capacity for the extraordinary because God loves them.

It is because God loves us that we can birth that love into the world. I was at a multifaith gathering last weekend. This is a group of people from many faiths – Muslim, Bahai, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and more who get together once a month to learn more about each other's religions. This past week was the United Churches turn. One of the guests, a non-Christian, asked us united, what we thought about 'the second coming of Christ'.

I answered the question by saying that, for me, I believe that every Christmas is another coming of Christ into the world, every year we prepare for the coming of Christ and that Christ is born in us each and every day we work towards making the world a better place. We're called to be the body of Christ in the world, to be the hands and feet of God in the world – our actions, how we live in the world – births Christ.

And we're all just ordinary people like Mary, living our lives, doing our thing, and maybe panicking a little bit when we hear the angels sing - to us – but if we can, like Mary, accept the message from the angels we can draw water with joy from the springs of salvation, we can shout and sing for joy because the holy one is great among you. The holy one is housed among you.

Like Mary, we may have our doubts, but that is why we take the time to prepare for this. Why we take weeks to get there. First we have to hope – hope that we can be ready, hope that we can open the doors when the holy one comes. Then we need to find

peace, peace within ourselves that – yes we are capable of this! We are worthy! And it's not vanity or arrogance that leads us there – rather the deep knowing that God picks the ordinary time and time again. Everyday people for an everyday world are just what God wants – because they know how to get things done.

And once we find peace within ourselves to do this work – a wellspring of joy that is eternal and ever more awaits us. Here it is, right here in our hearts – the house for the holy. And that is enough, we are enough.