

# **First Baptist Church Smiths Falls**

December 2, 2018 - First Sunday of Advent

## **Scripture Reading:** Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

## **Prayer of Illumination:**

**Message:** "The Wise Still Adore Him"

Introduction:

- It's okay to wish me a "Merry Christmas". I'm not only not offended by this term of hope, but I am so pleased to hear someone correctly identify this holiday season.. Don't wish me a "Happy Holiday," though. I'm not sure what that means any more than when a sales clerk wishes me "A good one!" whatever that means. When did we get the place where we

are ashamed of Christmas, whereas other faith's holidays are allowed and encouraged? God created Christmas in giving Jesus, the Baby, born in Bethlehem, but God has not created the chaos of the celebration of the Birth of the Eternal King - what is it with Black Friday, and Santa, reindeer, frosties, and jingle-bells any how?

- Today I want us to be ever so hopeful that Christmas is coming. I want us to release our Canadian right to tolerance, and inclusion, and instead let us single-mindedly get all excited about just one thing - the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Today, let's prepare for Communion at the Table of Remembrance by opening ourselves to the hope of this, the First Sunday of Advent.

Part 1: Mary

- Let's talk about Advent and Christmas first, beginning with Advent. Someone asked me this week what Advent is about. We are about to start a four week Adventure, as the word Advent suggests - a journey of understanding and preparation. Advent is about three things: first, Advent looks back to past, at the over 400 prophesies that all came true when a baby was born just as the angel Gabriel predicted in our Bible reading for today. Next, (2) we prepare for Christmas this year by

checking our walk with God, by praying and studying and getting excited that we can celebrate the birthday of the King of King, of the Messiah. Finally, (3) Advent is about the future. Any Advent celebration that does not remind the congregation that Jesus is returning for His Second Coming is empty. Advent is about Jesus, who is God made flesh who came as a baby long ago, so we celebrate his birth, and we await His return during the Advent and Christmas season.

- Christmas is about a young couple and a baby born in a quiet, out of the way village. Christmas is about baby who is Holy and is the Son of God, who was born to save the world.
- Let's look at the Christmas story through Mary, the young women in Luke 1 who is chosen by God to give birth to God's beloved Son, Jesus.
- Mary's story starts in Luke 1:26 with a visitation in a small village - in Galilee in the town of Nazareth. Mary is betrothed to be married, but is a virgin. The Angel Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a baby who shall be great (v. 31), and shall be the Son of the Most High (v. 32). This is a clear reference to the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ, as are the predictions in verse 33.
- Now, I'm not sure what you would do if you had such a visit, nor such a

prediction, but can you try to put yourself into Mary's place for just a while? Think about what it would be like to have God asking you, through an Archangel, to be the human conduit, the human carrier, the human means of bringing His own Beloved Son into the world. Now think about your response.

- Would your faith be challenged? Would your faith be confirmed? Would you be delighted, or too scared to speak at all? Would you stand erect and tall, or would you be curled-up on the ground?
- Let's go to verse 38 to see Mary's response: "*I am the lord's servant.*" she simply said.
- The mother of the Christ child shows us what we have to do this Christmas when we are challenged in our faith. The world is looking down on Christians and on Christ's Church. The world wants to dispel any belief in Christ, and erase the baby born in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago. You might be having a crisis of faith. You might have walked away from God, or turned your back on Jesus, or you might just be having a difficult time understanding God and how God fits into your daily walk. Maybe grief is consuming you, or crisis, or health issues, or fractured relationships. Look again at Mary and see how her faith leapt

in the face of adversary. And so can yours.

## Part 2: The Gift of Christmas

- Last week we talked about the greatest gift of Christmas, the Son of God, Jesus, who came to rescue us all and give us life. And the life Jesus came to give is two-fold: 1. It is life that abundant and full right now, today (John 10:10). And secondly, Jesus came to give us life eternal. This, the First Sunday of Advent, is the Sunday of Hope. What a great hope with have in Jesus Christ! We have the hope that very day of our lives Jesus will be watching over us, and the hope of eternal life when we breath our last. What is included in the gift that God is offering? A life of a renewed heart, a life of hope, peace and joy in Jesus, a life of eternal pleasure with God - these gifts are available to all.
- This table reminds us that nobody can afford the gift that God offers to us in Jesus Christ - you cannot purchase God's gift for three reasons:

## Part 3: Three Reasons You Cannot Get God's Gift on Your Own

- (1) God's gift is priceless. You could do nothing to purchase this gift on your own. You could not climb mountains, or cross oceans, or do great feats of strength and power. You do not get the gift of Jesus by work or deed. You could never afford it. It is a gift - a priceless gift from God

that He pleadingly wants to give to you. Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary for one purpose - it was not because He was evil, or that He was wrong in what He taught. Jesus did not die because He was a villain who was finally trapped by the authorities. Jesus did not even die because He was powerless, in fact He had the power to come off the cross and wipe out the whole lot of them. Instead Jesus died on the cross to be our lamb - a final sacrifice to God. He died, taking all our sins and wrong-doings, and paid the price for them in hell, leaving us to be free to come before God and no longer be separated from God's presence. This gift is priceless, it is beyond worth.

- BUT (2) God's gift is a costly gift - it will cost all that you have, but the rewards are incredible. The road to heaven is filled with rocks, steep hills, and bumps. But it is easiest to climb when you have Jesus to help you. But you must give God your all. You must give your everything. You must hold back nothing, but resign your entire life to the Christ, to Jesus, the Messiah. It is a costly gift of your entire life.
- (3) The gift is also FREE - Jesus makes it very easy to accept His gift - give your heart to Him - tell Him you love him - to call on Him to be your Saviour, to lay your sins before Him, and to accept the free gift of

Jesus. You can do that now - simply say after me: “Jesus, I want You to come into my life. Jesus, I need You to take away my sins. Jesus, make me a new creature in You. Forgive me, and wash me, and make me your child forever.”

Conclusion:

- Let me conclude with two challenges for you to take with you on this the First Sunday of Advent - 2 challenges for you to consider between now and Christmas. First, I want to challenge you to make sure that Christ is the centre of your Christmas, that everyone knows that Jesus Christ is the reason for your celebration - that the 25th of December is CHRISTMAS to you - a celebration of the birth of your Saviour.
- My second challenge to you this year is this: I challenge you to put yourself into this season of Hope. Please give and receive gifts out of the love in your heart. Please sing with joy the carols of hope. Please lovingly remind others of the Christ and live your life for the Christ of Christmas. And then enjoy having the best gift ever - life in Jesus - an eternal life of all abundance.