

Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm 80:1-7
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-55

Sermon December 19th, 2021

God's Redemption Is Already Here!

Advent is a season where we reflect on stories in the Bible that talk about the hope people have in God's future promises. The disciples believe that one day Jesus will come again to make everything right. The Israelites believe that one day God will rescue them from exile. The prophets proclaim that one day everyone will gather on God's holy mountain to live together in peace and harmony with one another, and with God. One day.

I don't know about you, but sometimes when I struggle to commit to something my children want me to do I come back with saying "one day we will do that. One day." My children have learned to hear this as "its not going to happen."

One day can feel like a long way off. It has been around two thousand years since we first heard the promise that Jesus will return. The Israelites did have to wait seventy years for the Persians to liberate them from Babylon. It's been 2500 years since the prophets talked about all us gathering on God's holy mountain together. Sometimes we might feel like it will never happen.

I think of people who suffer from chronic illnesses and conditions. They want to believe they will receive God's redemption from their suffering. But, day after day, they continue to feel pain and limitations from their condition with no light in sight (**Image**). Sometimes one day can feel like a long way off.

And yet, there are times where we bear witness to God's redemption in our world. The Israelites did experience liberation from exile. I have met lots of people who have either healed from their condition or illness or have found medications or other treatments that help them cope well with the condition or illness. And though we still wait to gather all together on God's holy mountain. We do see so much more openness to people of different ethnicities and beliefs coming together to do God's work in our world. Creating a more harmonious and peaceful society for us to live in (**Image**).

With these experiences in mind, these "one day" responses do give us some hope that we will experience God's redemption from our suffering. One day.

We hang on to this Advent message every Advent as we wait for Jesus to come again to make everything right. As we wait to experience redemption from our suffering.

Well, in our gospel this morning, Mary is visiting with her cousin Elizabeth. Now, one might think, they would spend most of their time looking towards the future. When a couple is expecting they often talk about all the things they need to do to prepare for the arrival of the baby (**Image**).

Yet, Mary and Elizabeth spend their time together sharing in their joy of what it means for Mary to have Jesus growing inside her. Their focus is on the present. Not the future hope that comes with the Messiah's arrival.

Maybe, Mary's encounter with God through the angel Gabriel, and now through the pregnancy has opened her eyes to see God's redemption acting in her life yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Not just tomorrow.

In her praise song to God, Mary sings that God has saved her. Luke doesn't go too much in detail on what Mary is being saved from. Later in the song Mary sings God has lifted her up from the lowly. Meaning, Mary lives close to the poverty line, is a teenage girl, and is seen by most as one of the lowest people in society (**Image**). God's invitation for her to be the mother of Jesus now elevates her in a big way. This is one way that God saves her (**Image**).

In Matthew's gospel we see that Joseph needed to be made aware of God's plan here. Otherwise, Joseph would have accused Mary of having an affair. So, in another sense God saves her from facing death for the accusation of committing adultery.

And then Mary could be singing about the bigger picture here. What dwells in her body right now is God's promise of redemption for her people.

Mary isn't seeing all this happening one day down the road. Mary is very much seeing God's redemption happening in her life in the here and now. In fact, Mary actually uses past tense in some of her praises to God for God's saving work.

God has helped Israel. God has filled the hungry. God has already been doing these things. So, why wouldn't God keep doing these things?

Through Mary's encounter with God, Mary's eyes are open to see that God's redemption is already here. Happening in her life, in her friends and family's lives, in her ancestors' lives, in everyone. God's redemption is already here.

Have your encounters with God, whether through a dream or a supernatural experience or a bible story or a prayer or a worship service or a sacrament or the kindness of a neighbour (**Image**), opened your eyes to see God's redemption at work in your lives and in the lives of others in the here and now?

Do you feel inspired by these encounters to sing as Mary sings? Declaring for everyone all that God has done?

As we transition from Advent to Christmas, we also, transition from clinging to the future hope that one day Jesus will come again to make everything right to seeing the redemption of God happening in the here and now through the birth of Jesus (**Image**).

Jesus, who goes on to redeem a lot of people from their suffering through his ministry, through his death and resurrection, through the church.

As we hope in God's promise that Jesus will come again to redeem us in fullness from our suffering. We all stand in God's fulfilled promise that through Christ Jesus we are experiencing God's redemption in our lives yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks and praise to you for the gift of Jesus our redeemer. Grant us patience as we await Jesus' return and the full measure of your redemption and justice for our lives and for our world. **Amen.**

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