

Fourth Sunday of Advent, 24 December 2023

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25-27;

Luke 1:26-38

Homily: Fr. Ken

The first reading from the Second Book of Samuel recalls the story of King David and his desire to build a temple for the Lord; but God promises instead to build a house, a dynasty for David.

In the second reading, Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, he exhorts the people that the mystery of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, is to be shared with all people everywhere.

The Gospel, from Luke, is the very familiar story of the angel Gabriel revealing to Mary that she is to become the mother of God's Son.

The message is the message of hope. It is a love story. It is the story of our God who loves us so much that God wants to live with us, to build a home with us.

Reflecting back to the Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament) reading, David knew well how much he depended on God's help in the building up of his kingdom. He wanted to build a temple in which that dependence could be expressed in worship. But God had other ideas. God wanted rather to make the family of David a lasting sign of God's care and protection. This would be a house built not with cut stones, but with people who would enter a covenant relationship of lasting love and fidelity.

The prophets had taught the people to trust that God would be faithful to that promise to David.

Then, we hear that very trust finding its fulfillment when Mary says: "Let what you have said be done to me".

God believes that women and men are worthy of God's love. So, God establishes a dwelling place on earth among the people of Israel, in the house of David.

Generations later, in Mary, God's presence is affirmed by the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God's Son. However, with God there is always something more. As we will celebrate in the season of Christmas, Christ was born to be the savior not just of the people of Israel but of the whole of humanity. This is the secret mystery of God which, as St. Paul tells the Romans, has now to be made known to all people so that everyone may know just how much God loves them and wants to share God's life with them for all eternity.

Today, many people think of the Christmas story in less than religious terms. They think it is only for children. It is good to become part of the Christmas spirit, especially amidst the horrible events of the coronavirus pandemic. But we do need to keep fully conscious of what it is that we are celebrating at Christmas.

For indeed, behind the presents, the music, the glitter and sparkle of Christmas, and the relative grandeur of a sumptuous Christmas dinner—with or without eggnog and fruitcake—there is the truth: the truth that God our Creator loves us so much that Jesus Christ, God's Son, was sent to us by God, and born of Mary, human like us in all things but sin.

Jesus is the abiding sign of God's eternal love, so that no matter how much we might experience human failure and disappointment, God's love never fails; God will never turn back on the promise to come to us and make a home with us.

Let us remember and welcome, again, this Good News, as we celebrate the birthday of God's Son, our brother Jesus Christ.

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