

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Dec 19th 2017

We have all found ourselves praying fervently in time of need – praying with all our heart; longing and waiting. Sometimes, it seems that after all our prayers there is nothing but silence. How many times in our lives have we given up on asking for what we need, and decided that God must have just said no and sent us on our way? How many times have we felt a type of “barrenness” or “impotence” in our lives, like the couples in the readings today? If we believe that each one of us were born to fulfill a purpose much grander than we could ever imagine, then the difficulties and challenges of our lives take on a whole new meaning. Although I personally believe that there is nothing impossible for God to do, I too, like Zechariah, have had moments when I questioned God’s promise.

Even though most of our parents weren’t visited by an angel to announce our births in a dramatic way, we all share the story of Samson and John the Baptist; yes, our parents waited for us, we were born, and then we went out into the world to fulfill our purpose; our holy purpose. Let us imagine for a second that the moment we were born, God said to us “You, child of mine, you who have my spirit, no matter what name you are given from this day on, you will be set aside for a holy purpose, and all you create in your life will also have a holy purpose. Now let go, trust me, and let me guide your path.” If we believed in some way that God whispered this into our ears when we were born and before we were born, would it be easier to wait in the silence? To wait for years and years for a prayer to be answered? Would it be easier to be hopeful and content? Would it be easier to believe that our time is not God’s time and it’s never too late for a prayer to be answered if it aligns with our holy purpose, and if it is for the greater glory of God?

Yesterday, I arrived for an appointment, and sat waiting in the lobby. I would like to say that I was waiting patiently, but that would be a lie. Just as I was about to start complaining, I remembered something I read last month about the practice of mindfulness, so I decided to focus on something random in the present moment and think of nothing in particular. I focused on a door that was slightly open, not by much more than a few inches, but enough to see that it was dark in that room. I stared at the door for a while, and then I began to fill a sense of anticipation. That didn’t make any sense at the time because I knew the room was dark, so there couldn’t be anyone on the other side. What could I have been expecting to come out of that room? The more I stared, the more I had the feeling that the slightly open door would swing open and someone would say something exciting, or someone would jump out and say, “surprise! Here are gifts for everyone.” I know it sounds ridiculous, but I was actually starting to feel eager as if I knew for a fact that something good was coming through this slightly open door. It was a kind of random experience, till I realized that it was not random; it was an Advent experience. Yes, we all have Advent experiences each day, and sometimes we notice, and other times, as I often do, miss the opportunity to experience it fully.

During this Advent season – this time of waiting and longing for the “birth” of something wonderful in our lives – whatever that might be for us – let’s spend time preparing our hearts and renewing our spirits. It is in our longing and waiting we encounter God; it is in our emptiness we could remember God’s whispers at the time of our birth. This Advent, whether we are grieving the loss of a friend, a spouse, a child, a parent, a pet, or if we have been feeling that nothing has come from our efforts, or if an illness has slowly stolen our joy, our energy and left us shackled in despair, let’s go and let God surprise us. Remember we have a holy purpose, so we can spend Advent just breathing in the silence

while we await the birth of the Good news.

O ROOT OF JESSE,

that stands for an ensign of the people,

before whom the kings keep silence

and unto whom the Gentiles shall make supplication:

Come, to deliver us, and tarry not.

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