

Advent Devotional REJOICE part 1

Monday, December 17, 2018

There is an amusing story about Walt Disney as a fifth grader. (Since I found it on the internet, it may or may not be true.) The teacher assigned the students to color a flower garden. As she walked the rows of desks looking at her students' work she stopped by Walt's desk. Noting that his drawings were different, she remarked, "Walt that is not right. Flowers do not have faces on them." Sincerely and with confidence he replied, "Mine do."

In the following story, Mary has just found out she is pregnant and journeys to visit her relative Elizabeth. As you read the story note Mary's spoken response and try to imagine her unspoken response.

Luke 1:39-47 Common English Bible

"Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her.

"Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord!  
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior."

Mary had a lot going on. Mary had much to worry about. She is probably overwhelmed. She is engaged, and yet will be pregnant, but not by her fiancé. She lives in Nazareth. Nazareth was of very low social status, made up of farmers, laborers and shepherds.

When I visited Nazareth in December of 1985 I thought to myself, no wonder there was the saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Mary is young, we would call her a teen-ager, but back in that day she was considered an adult. She has never had any children, and she has never been married. She is engaged for the very first time. She becomes pregnant and is told by an angel that she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. How do you handle that? How will she explain that to her family, friends and fiancé? If her fiancé Joseph does not believe her and brings an accusation of adultery against her, she could be stoned to death. All things considered, a response of exuberant joy seems as unlikely as flowers with faces.

When Mary arrives at Elizabeth's house, before she could speak a word, Elizabeth blurts out, "God has blessed you." The child in Elizabeth's womb (who will be John the Baptizer) leaps for joy. Mary expresses exuberant joy in what God is doing in her and through her. Rejoicing is her response. Can that be right? In the midst of confusion and worry and an uncertain future, Mary responds with joy. It seems as odd as flowers with faces.

If you ever go to Disneyland or Disneyworld look for flowers with faces, they are expressively joyful.

In times of confusion, worry and what may seem to be an uncertain future, may the Holy Spirit help us respond with exuberant joy that Jesus is born. Just a warning: if you do respond with joy, some will say, "That is not right!" And you can say, "My flowers have faces, and my life has joy. "

REJOICE!  
Pastor Jeff