advent 2008

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Meditations for the Season

offered by the people of Trinity Cathedral

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Sunday, November 30
Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Cor 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

Three of today's readings bring to mind some pieces of popular culture. The passages from Psalm 8, Isaiah 64, and Mark 13 find an echo in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man,* at the moment when the upright and uptight citizens acknowledge that there's "Trouble in River City...we got TROUBLE!" Pool halls, slang-laden literature, tricksters, and sassy kids are the scourge of Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn's day. (The panicking adults are not entirely blameless either—but who is?) Who shall save them? And when? Harold Hill in the Library with the trombone?

Or consider the recent record of our country's activities in our current world, which reads like a reflection of the scriptural description of a people "fed...with the bread of tears...the scorn of our neighbors..." whose "righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth." In the words of that great philosopher Pogo, we have met the enemy and he is us!

Cleaning up the mess is a job for SuperGod, who already helped our spiritual forefathers with surprising, awesome deeds that shook all of creation. God'll do it again, at a time of God's own choosing, and God's people will again realize Life.

Judith Eckelmeyer

Monday, December 1

The centurion replied, "Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just say the word and my servant will be cured." Matthew 8:6-7.

A simple tale of faith:
A Roman commander, pagan, practical, precise.
A valued servant, lowly, lame, loved.
A Jewish healer, willing, waiting, worthy.

"Sir, I speak as a person of authority, who understands authority.
Please heal my man."

"I will. Let us go to your home, Officer"

"No need, Sir. I am not ready for you to come to my home.
Just say the word, and the mission will be accomplished."

"Wow. Now that is Faith! If only the Believers would understand."

In this time of expectation and anticipation, am I prepared to accept –
A simple tale of Faith?

Wayne Bifano

Tuesday, December 2
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-8
Luke 10:21-24

What a blessing to have such uplifting words on which to pray and reflect. The essence of Holiness is encompassed by these readings. From the stump of Jesse will come to us a spirit of wisdom and understanding; counsel that is powerful; knowledge; and a deep respect for the Creator.

In a world where injustice is obvious in daily life, the wrongdoings of some cause hardship for many, and natural disasters sweep the landscape, we take a moment to live in the Kingdom of God. We take a moment when no one will hurt or destroy. God will strike the earth with the rod of God's mouth, and with God's breath will kill all that is evil. This is a moment in time when words are so powerful that all will hear and want to conform to a way of peace and caring for all of creation.

Just imagine, rain falling on grass and being absorbed and life being renewed. So also, the love of our God can be absorbed into our lives for the purpose of renewal. There are infants who can see and wise folks who can not. Blessed are those who seek to know the Holy even for just a moment.

Diane Hexter

Wednesday, December 3
Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 23
Matthew 15:29-39

Last year some friends presented me with *The Pastors' Wives' Cookbook,* a compilation of recipes from the wives of southern Baptist clergy. Those women understand food production. Yea verily, the feeding of the five thousand was a once-in-a-millennium event, worthy of unbroken praise, but the spouses of clergy feed dozens, even hundreds, on a regular basis. Blessed be the clergy spouses, for they too shall feed multitudes.

Jesus understood that across a shared table we make connections that enrich and restore our lives. It's not so much about menu—although I did find a recipe with tuna, jelloTM and cool whipTM in the same dish—as it is about welcome. We once changed our world over the toughest leg of lamb that ever mortified this cook. It's your turn. Invite the lame, the maimed, the blind and the mute to your table. Invite those who are different, those who make you uncomfortable, with whom you disagree—just as they are, just as you are. Share what you have and you will be healed. Come on in, I only have pimentos, canned pineapple, cream cheese and lemon jello, but out of that I will make a Perfection Salad.

Emily Ingalls

Thursday, December 4
Isaiah 26:1-6
Psalm 118:19-24
Matthew 7:21-27

Today's readings talk about attaining two things I seek: peace and the Kingdom of Heaven. Both sound pretty good to me.

According to Isaiah, all we have to do to attain peace is to be of steadfast mind, trusting in God. It sounds so simple, and yet sometimes my ego, my fears or my pains get in the way and I forget that God is in control and has my best interests at heart. Instead I try to control things myself. This is the hard way, and often it takes me making a mess of things before I realize I am doing it—again.

Similarly, Matthew tells us all we need to do to attain the Kingdom of Heaven is live our life doing the will of God. Unfortunately, I sometimes find it difficult to understand exactly what it is God wants me to do, and once again my ego, my fears and my pains take over. God pushes back, putting roadblocks in my way to get my attention. When I give control back to God, the roadblocks disappear.

The ego and our emotions are powerful. The only thing that works for me is to surrender them, to give them back to God. Then I can hear God more clearly and find some peace, and a piece of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sherry Watts

Friday, December 5
Isaiah 29:17-24
Psalm 27: 1-6, 13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." Matthew 9:29

Last Saturday, as I unloaded my car by the laundromat with baskets and baskets of clothes to be washed, a scruffy man in tattered jeans sauntered by. He carried a small cloth sack over his shoulder, perhaps holding his only belongings. He turned his face to me and then to the heavy load packed high in my car. He paused. He smiled a knowing smile and winked. Then with the small sack slung over his shoulder, he went on his way.

At that moment, my mind's eye saw a poor and homeless man in need. In my heart, I felt the sting leading to repentance. I heard the call to justice in the assumption that God's realm is not yet here and is still to come. Yet, that man's smile told me he believed his burden was lighter than my own, literally and figuratively. In his wink, he embraced a new reality, already present and breaking into our disparate circumstances.

It is a paradox that we work for justice as if ushering in God's realm, yet in moments of grace, we see everywhere the kingdom already here. The cusp of these two is the stuff of faith, and we walk in it all the time. We call it "eternal life."

Sharon L. Schwenk

Saturday, December 6
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Psalm 147:1-12
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5-8

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praises on the harp to our God. Psalm 147

This Advent season, I want to reflect on blessings. In a year when so many paradigms have been shifted, so many beliefs dispelled, and when the gifts of the season seem sure to be less than in any year in recent memory, I want to focus on the ultimate gift this sacred season promises.

When so many of us have lost jobs, income, and retirement nest eggs, it's difficult. Those of us that have been spared the most difficult hardships are slashing our personal and business budgets, preparing for more gloom and volatility ahead.

What better time to retrench and focus on the gift Advent brings us: an opportunity for ultimate salvation through Christ's sacrifice on Earth? How can I be more deserving of this gift? Am I doing everything God has asked of me in return? All of us have the ability to do more of what God asks of us. But it takes focus, commitment, and prayer.

This season, even more than others, help me focus on what I've been given. God's gift is beyond any other, and in the giving, there is great responsibility bestowed on me.

Scott Blanchard

Sunday, December 7
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

A few years ago, Trinity had a visit from Steve Ross, author of the graphic novel *Marked*. The book is based on the Gospel of Mark, which we began last Sunday with Year B of the lectionary cycle. In *Marked,* the devil rides in a stretch limousine, Moses looks like Frederick Douglass, and the angel at the tomb is a clown.

John the Baptist, who appears in today's reading clothed in camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey, is in *Marked* a hunchback eating out of a dumpster. His call to prepare the way for Jesus comes via a telephone in an alley, and after listening for a moment, he responds, "Sure. I'll deliver the message...Consequences? Don't make me laugh...How much worse can it get?"

Lately a lot of us have been asking just that question—how much worse can it get? Unlike John the Baptist, however, we seem to want an answer. We scan stock market reports, bailout packages and the faces of the people we always thought were in charge, anxiously looking for certainty about where the bottom will be. We reason that if we know, we can prepare.

But maybe we've got it wrong and John had it right. Maybe the question "how much worse can it get?" liberates us to become voices crying out in the wilderness. To prepare not our own way, but the way of the Lord.

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd;" says Isaiah. "He will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."

How much better could it get?

Rebecca Wilson

Monday, December 8
Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 85:8-13
Luke 5:17-26

How's this for strange: I signed up for this date randomly at Ministry Fair, and it turns out to be the day after my final Sunday at Trinity.

It's Isaiah's vision that speaks to me: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees." And the prophet's promise that "no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray," provide comfort amidst the uncertainty.

They're especially nice to hear as the cats and I load up the truck to drive to the mountains of New Hampshire. (Darlene and JJ the dog are coming later.) As I leave the beloved familiar of Trinity, I am confronted by the sadness of parting, nervousness in the unknown, and the thrill of knowing that God promises not only to go with us to NH, but to continue living into the great vision of Trinity Cathedral and Cleveland.

And the promise that we will come together again, singing in great joy.

Love you and miss you already.

Kurt

Tuesday, December 9
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 96
Matthew 18:12-14

This past year I was able to attend the Province V Assembly of the Daughters of the King in Michigan where I was introduced to the Anglican Rosary as a prayer tool. I would like to share with you several passages from today's readings that keep going through my mind and are giving me much comfort and peace in this hectic time.

Please join me in this prayer circle as we start and end with the Cross, praying the Lord's Prayer and the Invitatory Bead. Then we'll repeat each "Week" seven times with a Cruciform bead in between each "Week."

Shall we pray,

Cross: The Lord's Prayer
Invitatory Bead (IB): Comfort, O comfort my people says your God.
Cruciform Bead (CB): A voice cries out, 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,'
First Week: Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.
Second Week: [God] will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.
Third Week: O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Fourth Week: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; ...heaven does not want any of these little children to be lost.

Amen

Debbie Hunter

Wednesday, December 10
Isaiah 40:25-31
Psalm 103:1-10
Matthew 11:28-30

Three of my favorite Scripture passages all on one day. Please read them all and enjoy! The part that stands out for me today, though, is this:

Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

I admit it. I'm weary. And, as a third-half-of-lifer, my youth is far behind me. It's been a long year, full of ups and downs, both personal and political. On the personal level, it's brought a joyful wedding in my family, but also frightening illness; the death of a dear friend; two young lives of our acquaintance tragically ended.

On the national level, what can I say? Presidential primaries; a tanking economy; seemingly endless war; and the exhilaration or disappointment, depending on your point of view, of Election Day.

And still the roller coaster rides on, for change has always been part of life—the pace has just picked up a bit (a lot?) lately. And we get tired. But we have a constant source of strength and refreshment. Thanks be to God!

Charlotte Nichols

Thursday, December 11
Isaiah 41:13-20
Psalm 145:1-4, 8-13
Matthew 11:7-15

Let anyone with ears listen.
I have ears, but do I listen? Do I listen to the calling of the Spirit? Do I listen to the calling of my brothers and sisters walking life's journey? Listening is a learned skill. Hearing is involuntary, but listening is an active action. What a different world this would be if we (for example):

- Listen to the children cry instead of hearing them.

What (or whom) do you need to listen to instead of hear?

- Listen to _____ instead of hearing them.

In listening we will see what as Christians we came to see in the Gospel, the life of God.

Judith Alexis

Friday, December 12
Isaiah 48:17-19
Psalm 1
Matthew 11:16-19

"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go." Isaiah 48:17

Not long ago I came across a quote from Bishop Spong that says: "... God is more than just a security anchor. God is a future hope, a dream, and a reality beckoning you to live, to love and to be."

Most of us, in our fear of the unknown, are all too ready to cling to the false security of the dependent child—letting other people else take the risk of living, loving fully, having their boundaries expanded and, in so doing, finally growing up. It's interesting that humankind has remained so child-like in its understanding of God. I guess it is easier to believe in a Super-being that we can beg things from than to believe in a divine love that is totally self-giving.

If we are not willing to take the risk to let go of the false security of yesterday's anchor, and to venture forth into life, we wither away, becoming dried husks of what we are intended to be. For, as Christians we have been given a new commandment: We are to love others with the love with which God has loved each of us. **We are to be the bearers of life, the enhancers of love, those who give others the courage to be all that they can be.** Thereby all will know that we are disciples of Christ.

Edward Metz

Saturday, December 13
Sirach 48:1-11
Psalm 80:1-3, 14-18
Matthew 17:9-13

Many in today's world join the psalmist in the prayer, "Stir up your might and come to save us!" Some ask this of God, others of a charismatic political leader; and some have no object for their prayer, only the knowledge of their need.

Elijah was once God's answer to the cries of the people. They saw their nation being run by greed and corruption. They experienced discrimination and persecution for their faithfulness to God. God's answer was to send a most unlikely figure – an unknown man from a small village who just showed up one day, proclaimed a devastating drought, and disappeared into the desert. After three years of famine, the king against whom the people had prayed called Elijah "the troubler of Israel."

Elijah recognized that trouble was exactly what Israel needed. The recovery of the nation required famine and slaughter, but also hearing the voice of God in times of silence.

As we await God's coming to us this Advent season, may we be open enough to recognize Christ in all the unlikely forms in which he appears.

Jeff Spiess

Sunday, December 14
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Advent is the season of hope, of expectations, and ultimately fulfillment. In a time of year that, in the northern hemisphere, is often dreary, a persistent thread of hope runs through the gray days and ever longer nights. Although it seems as if the world is dark and growing darker, joy comes.

In the Gospel of John the arrival of joy is proclaimed. "(John) came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light."(John 1:7-8) John tells the people that, although they do not yet know it, God's gift of Himself to the world has already come. The day of liberty and release of which Isaiah had spoken, of which the psalm writer had sung, the sudden happy turn in human history had taken place. It is a time for rejoicing.

This message of God's love, promised and fulfilled, is the heart of Christianity. Although our world (and certainly we ourselves) is not perfect, although we often sow in tears and go out weeping, God's love, His advent into the history of our world, sustains us and makes the joy real.

Laura Blunk

December 15
Psalm 25:3-8
Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a
Matthew 21:23-27

I am supposed to be meditating on the readings for this date but a recent conversation comes to mind instead. Someone told me she believes that everyone who repents and believes in Jesus will be saved but when we get to heaven we will have greater or lesser rewards based on our deeds while alive. Is this the Good News of Advent? That we can all be worthy if we do the "right" thing but some of us will be more worthy than others? Seems like the same ol' same ol' to me.

I'm thinking about Advent. What we are awaiting is the birth of a baby. Babies are new beings. They are a clean slate; no past hurts or offenses, no baggage. I don't think it is chance or happenstance that we celebrate the Messiah first as a baby. This is how we all begin, clean and new, without having to do anything except be born. It's how we all will be again. Clean and new. No degrees of clean or levels of brightness. Nothing to do to earn it but just to be. Like a baby.

Could be that's the Good News.

Toni Ponzo

Tuesday, December 16
Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
Psalm 34:1-8
Matthew 21:28-32

Here's Zephaniah: "Woe to her that is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city!" It's that introductory "Woe to [whomever]" that always gets me. "I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones. I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly."

I have often associated words like these with angry, rule-bound people projecting upon God their small frustrations. "Justice will come, and I will be proven right, and all you undeserving people who haven't been following the rules--THE RULES--will regret it. God will humiliate you. You'll see." That seems to be the suggestion.

But lately I've been feeling differently. After years of living on debt, Americans scared by the financial crisis are starting to save. Now that global warming is here, green is the new black, and spending more not to damage the planet further seems to be gaining traction. The short-term and shallow self-interest embodied by conspicuous consumption is being replaced by—what? In some cases, merely fear of poverty. But in other cases... humility, grounded in faith and a spirit of peace. Humility is not the same thing as humiliation. Not God's vengeance, but God's grace.

Peace to you.

Brant Lee

Wednesday, December 17
Genesis 49:2,8-10
Psalm 72:1-8
Matthew 1:1-7, 17

The reading I was given for this meditation is one of those passages that we often skip over, one that never seems to have any effect on our faith. Matthew sets up his gospel by recounting the genealogy of Jesus. It's very obvious to us why he does this, he needs to assert that Jesus is part of the house of David and therefore can be the Messiah. But realizing this, most of us brush it off because it really doesn't matter to us. I think I can count almost 50 names that I don't recognize in this passage. But this mattered so much to Matthew that he put it at the beginning of his gospel. He wanted people to open their minds to the possibility that Jesus was in fact the Messiah and this introduction and genealogy was the best way he found to accomplish this.

Knowing what this passage is about is essential to the idea of Advent, because Advent is about opening our minds to the idea that a baby born in a stable to a carpenter and his fiancé be could be the Messiah. This passage may not be relevant today, but the idea behind it is. If we open our minds to God we will have a much easier time opening our hearts to him also. That being said, keep your minds open this Advent. And not only open to the Bible but to everything around you, because God is in everything and everyone and if your mind is open to them it will be open to God as well.

Karl Bitikofer

Thursday, December 18
Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 72:11-18
Matthew 1:18-25

I am reminded of an old Christmas carol (from my Lutheran youth) that tells today's Gospel story with simplicity, as a conversation between Mary and Joseph.

"Gentle Joseph, Joseph dear, stay with me, for the baby's near:
God will surely your goodness hear, as you will love this newborn child," says Mary.

"Gladly Mary, Mary mine, I will cradle the child divine;
Here will heaven and earth combine, for you will bear God's child, O dearest Mary."

"Peace to all and God's goodwill," heaven and earth with this song will fill;
Soon will God, in the evening still, be born in Bethlehem, the child of Mary.

I do like the idea of honoring the role of Gentle Joseph, especially as he wrestles with the "shame" of Mary not being a virgin and his decision to stay with her.

This is a good message, but not necessarily the whole message. Unfortunately, it is tempting to get caught up in the often-debated details of today's Gospel reading:

Joseph finds out that Mary is not a virgin.
Joseph plans to call off the engagement
But an angel comes to him in a dream and persuades him to stay with Mary

Rather than in the part when the angel explains to Joseph that this child is special:

This child was from the Holy Spirit
And was to fulfill the promise of the prophets!
And that his name is to be Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

So, "soon will God, in the evening still, be born in Bethlehem, the child of Mary" with Gentle Joseph by her side...AND salvation has been created for us.

Steve Loger

Friday, December 19
Psalm 67
Isaiah 56:1-10
John 5:33-36

Today's Old Testament reading and Psalm emphasize that our human prejudices and limitations will not bind God's love. Our God "gathers the outcasts" and is always seeking others "besides those already gathered." These words both challenge and encourage us in our call to radical hospitality here at Trinity. They challenge and encourage us to move beyond our notions of what is comfortable or acceptable.

This passage leads me to look at my own tendency to cast certain people out of my heart. Who are these people? Sometimes they are those who look, think or act in ways that seem beyond my ability to accept them. Sometimes they are people whose words or actions have hurt or frightened me. Often they are those who remind me of parts of myself I'd rather not acknowledge.

We can be so hard on ourselves and inevitably that leads us to be hard on others. Sometimes when I pray, "Lord, have mercy," I sense that I am really the one who needs to have mercy, on myself and on others. God already does.

Charlotte Nichols

Saturday, December 20
Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24
Luke 1:26-38

In Psalm 24, the author asks, "Who is this King of Glory?" The psalmist answers by describing a strong God who is mighty in battle. Some identify with a powerful, conquering God, others with the Creator God referred to in the first part of the Psalm.

If you ask ten different people who God is, you will receive at least ten different answers. Some may inspire you; other answers may alarm you. I will not even try to propose an answer this question. The important piece is not the answer; it is the question.

Each of us has a slightly different take on God and we have to struggle with what this means to us. While we have the Bible, clergy, tradition, friends, family and intuition as tools and support through our search, only within each of us will we find the answer.
So, I ask you... Who is this King of Glory?

Joy Blake

Sunday, December 21
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19 -26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

Home for the holidays. It's a cliché out of a '30s movie: The sleigh, brimming with presents, carries the family from the train station to grandma and grandpa's snowy farmhouse in New Hampshire. All the noisy distractions, dilemmas and demands of the holiday season, depicted in the movie's first 60 minutes, that threatened to derail the happy reunion, have been resolved. The tree is up and decorated, the presents are bought (and the stores are finally closed), the cookies are baked and the turkey's in the oven.

Whether it's a movie scene, a hope or a reality, the dream of the chaotic holiday hustle resolving itself in a place of comfort, love and peace lies within all of us. We all long for a home that transcends place and time and a long to-do list, a place where our wandering, both physically and spiritual, can end, and we are in the place God intended us to be.

Anastasia Pantsios

Monday, December 22
1 Samuel 1:19-28
Psalm 122
Luke 1:46-56

In Samuel 1:19-28, a woman named Hannah has been attempting to conceive a child. She prays to God for a baby boy, and promises to give him up to be a nazarite if she is granted this request. Hannah soon becomes pregnant, and remembering her promise, gives up her child to God. Luke 1:46-56 tells a similar story. Mary, a virgin and to be married soon, is suddenly impregnated by God. Today, this kind of situation could prove catastrophic for a marriage. However, Mary has faith and instead praises God for all the things he has done, and for giving her a child. These stories illustrate the power of faith of two women who unexpectedly become pregnant. Hannah is anxious to conceive, but she doesn't forget the promise she made to God. She could've kept the child for herself, but she doesn't. In Mary's case, she could've taken the news badly. Instead, she responded with praise and thanked God. Perhaps this can serve as a lesson to consider when we are given unexpected news.

Psalm 122 is a song of praise and a prayer for Jerusalem. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.'" Jerusalem has always been a birthplace and battleground for three religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This song and prayer has special relevance today because of the conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis over the control of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is just as much at risk as when the Psalm was written. The fact that this message, written thousands of years ago, is still relevant today is significant in that we still haven't solved longstanding religious conflicts.

Janet Herrgesell

Tuesday, December 23
Malachi 3:1-5
Psalm 25:1-14
Luke 1:57-66

A fuller's job was simple, to cleanse and thicken cloth. They are mostly remembered for just the cleansing or removing of impurities, which is what is alluded to in the Malachi passage.

What strikes me about the verse is the use of the words purify and purifier. Apparently, we are the silver with trace amounts of some impurities; our true value obscured by some naturally occurring flaw.

While precious metals don't typically benefit from impurities, according to Wikipedia, some precious stones and gems are actually enhanced by impurities. In fact, their very value is dependent on impurities. Beryl, which is colorless in its pure mineral form, becomes emerald with chromium impurities. Some gemstone treatments actually make use of the fact that these impurities can be manipulated, thus enhancing their color and thereby boosting their overall appeal. Stones also benefit equal by impurities that are added during their formation. Without impurities, marble stone would always be a uniform color.

I'm not a geologist nor do I play one on T.V. I also never took rocks for jocks so the analogy of impurities as it relates to stones and gems may not be applicable. However, it seems to me that what one person considers an impurity can be what another person considers a core characteristic. We should be careful about what we refer to as impurities. An ocean is supposed to have waves and a rose is supposed to have thorns.

Fred Blake

Wednesday, December 24
2 Samuel 7:1-16
Pslam 89:1-4, 19-29
Luke 1:67-79

We sit in darkness.
We wait in darkness.

Truth be told, we live in a dark world. WaterAid estimates that 5,000 children around the world die each day as a result of diseases caused by unclean water and poor sanitation. Water, that baptismal element with which we mark ourselves and our infants as followers of Christ, is the cause of death of 5000 children a day.

This is our world. This is where we live and move and have our being. "We sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," Luke writes, waiting for a baby to be born.

A baby will save us. It seems ridiculous. It is ridiculous. Weak, tiny, vulnerable; a Jewish infant in a Roman world. One tiny baby. Threatened by kings and Caesars, by all the powers of this world. Doomed to die.

And yet the promise of this shamed and crucified first-century Jewish healer somehow buoys us. In this season of darkness and waiting that we call Advent, when all seems cold and winter, we hold fast to a faith founded on the seemingly ridiculous conviction that death doesn't have the final say in this world, despite all evidence to the contrary.

5000 children die each day because human beings fail at water.

And yet, we hope. For some kind of light in a world of darkness. The Gospel of John tells us that "a light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it."

We sit in darkness.
We wait in darkness.

Selah.

Adam Spencer