

Despair and Promise

Advent 4 C

Luke 1:39-55

St. Michael's, GPW

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

December 22, 2024

Good morning!

I have found myself somewhat overwhelmed with the wretched, deplorable state of humanity. What we as humans do to one another and what we as humans allow to happen to each other, by overt actions or willful ignorance is despicable and deadly. I found myself, turning off the news as a reporter narrated their walk-through President Bashar al-Assad's infamous Damascus prison, Sednaya. As best as people can tell 100,000s of political prisoners, people, living, breathing people disappeared in this torture pen. Many of whom will never be heard from again. Human beings did unspeakable acts to other human beings. Actions that I choose not to hear, because I cannot tolerate the descriptions. In some ways I am weak.

The people of Gaza are steadily being annihilated by both the Israeli Defense Forces and the deeply duplicitous nature of Hamas and Hezbollah. The people of Israel have suffered through and endured thousands of rocket attacks, suicide bombers, terrorist raids and kidnapping from these groups. Our government's policies have at various points added to and supported the ongoing suffering and deaths in these regions.

I hear. And somehow, I cannot even begin to conceive...

The next minute, changing stations on my radio, I hear the promise of scripture and sounds of carols and rejoicing in an event that happened in this region 2000 years ago and I shutdown.

The bleak midwinter is more than *frosty winds made moan*. The bleak midwinter is more than cold upon cold.

She is young. She is pregnant. She is not married. She is brave. She is curious. She is strong. She travels, walking, about 90 miles. To meet her elderly cousin, who is also surprisingly pregnant.

They meet. They greet. The babies lurch in their wombs. And they both know that holiness is in their midst. Each understands in a limited way that begins to expand more each day, that God is about to do a new thing. That God come to earth, risking being loved by us, is calling us to something more than the world can ask or imagine.

God in the world, Jesus being born, asks and trusts that human beings, the very same species that can do such insane harm, can also turn, stop, hold and protect a child. We can love beyond ourselves. When we do, we are changed, we are made strong.

Mary said, "Yes." Elizabeth bore witness, so that we might, see a child grow, become a man, an anointed one, who loves all, welcomes all, risks all. This day, in this fractured world filled with pain, may we hear the cries of the world. May we stop. May we turn. May we stand firm offering all we have to honor and love, other human beings. In this fractured world, may we turn out, and not in. May we risk offering who we are, and what we have to hold another's pain, share another's grief, and proclaim our hope in something coming soon, again for the very first time. God, Emmanuel, God with us, so that in this world of pain we are not alone.

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. He will come and show us a different way.

My soul magnifies the Lord. My Spirit rejoices in God my saviour. In spite of and because of it all.

Amen.