

March 25, 2020

In the Anglican calendar, today we celebrate the Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary... if those words sound unfamiliar to your ears, perhaps these will be more familiar:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary... (Luke 1)

The passage goes on, of course. Mary learns she is to have a baby! And then I imagine poor Mary's racing mind could only take in occasional words, "The Son of the Most High... reign... house of Jacob forever, Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age... conceived a son... nothing... impossible... God." And Mary said, 'Here am I...'" (And Mary went with haste to see Elizabeth to figure out what was going on!)

As strange as it seems for us to be hearing about that baby in March, how much, much stranger would it have been for Mary! As I tried to type out an abbreviated version of that passage from Luke, I was recalling what we have all heard, I imagine, that once you hear the word "cancer", you hear little else. So it must have been for Mary. "I am going to what?!" and her racing mind would not have grasped much of what was spoken...

It seems to me that this portion of Luke underlines for us what we only partially know. That, just like nine months ago, none of us would have imagined this time of Covid-19 and isolation would be upon us. Also, none of us know what we will be doing in nine months! Our lives all can take bizarre turns, at any time. And this one we are in together...

That being the case, though, it is good then that today we hear of the child, the one who brings a promise of salvation, of God's mercy, of God's faithfulness. It is good to be reminded! We don't know how these next months will unfold: no idea... but we do confess daily, that they will do so in God's goodness, God's faithfulness, God's love.

Psalm 85, appointed for today, says the same thing. (Read the words slowly – breathing...)

Restore us again, O God of our salvation...

Let me hear what God will speak, for God will speak peace to God's people, to God's faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts...

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps.

We can't know how these next months will unfold, but still we hear and affirm that our God is faithful and merciful. That love and faithfulness will meet – from God, and from us. That somehow in the midst of this, the Lord will give what is good.

So friends, God's love and faithfulness be with each of you this day.

As you go about your day, take a few moments to sit in peace and prayer, and seek God's love and faithfulness for the people around you and the people half a world away. We all need love and faithfulness from God – and from each other.

Blessings and love,
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