

Why Has This Happened to Us?

Scripture: Luke 1:39 – 56

Third Sunday of Advent 2023

Let us open in prayer: Jesus is coming! We gather to prepare the way with prayer, song, and listening. Our lives are thirsty and dry. May the Holy Spirit fill our worship with hopeful expectation of the saving presence of God. Renew us O Lord; Refresh us, O God, with streams of mercy and grace. AMEN.

At this time of year, if I asked a child – Who is coming? The child would probably speak about the fat man in the red suit – Santa Claus! For a child, this season is about Santa and presents. If I asked you – Who is coming? You may respond the same way or you may respond about this season being a time of accumulating debt as you buy many presents for many different people. So – Who is coming?

As Christians, this season of Advent must be about the babe in the manger. It must be about Jesus Christ!

Mary who is visibly pregnant makes a journey out into the country side to visit her cousin Elizabeth. This is Zechariah's wife who is much farther along in her pregnancy than Mary. Elizabeth lives in the hills, she does not live in the hood. Mary needs a maternal visit. Mary is a spiritual sojourner seeking support from her cousin. So Elizabeth, the priestly progeny, and Mary, this poor teenage girl, need each other's support.

When Elizabeth hear Mary's voice as she is arriving, the child in her belly leaps in her womb. And Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and says in a loud voice – 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.' Elizabeth then asked our question for today – Why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

Elizabeth question for Mary is – Why has this happened to me?

The question we will look at today is – Why has this happened to us? Why have we been brought together in Bethany Beach DE to service Jesus Christ?

Not long ago we celebrated 25 years of year round ministry, but we need to know – why are we here? We need to go on a spiritual sojourn to seek the support of others and Christ. Why are we here two blocks from the beach?

When I think about this church, my belly leaps for joy. When I think about this church, I am filled with Holy Spirit and I want to say aloud - Blessed are we, the members of the BBCC (DOC), to have such a vital ministry here on the beach.

Why did we have two 'normal' months four years ago and then the world changed as COVID made us live in isolation? Why did this happen to us?

Why did we have on Sunday in March of 2020 when we gave out drive up communion as our worship service? Why did this happen to us?

Why did we record a service on a Thursday with only four or five people in the church, then edit it and post it on YouTube? Why did this happen to us?

Why did we then have worship services in our parking lot in front of Campbell hall for a summer to meet the needs of our congregation? Why did this happen to us?

Why did we worship outside with social distancing through very hot and windy Sundays? Why did this happen to us?

Why did we produce 100 record services on YouTube and have over 30 services in our parking lot! Why did this happen to us?

Why have we had over twenty people join our church in the since the start of COVID? Why has this happened to us?

So why has this happened to us? Because it is God's will that we are here in this community to serve Jesus Christ.

In Mary's song from Luke's Gospel, Mary sings of God's power to reverse the fortunes of the weak, the hungry, and the disadvantaged. Through the power of God, a young girl with little power will always be remembered for the way she gave into God. God has lifted her up to be used to bring Jesus into the world. Mary has been selected to be the mother of Christ!

While God lifts up those with no power, her song is a warning to those with power and privilege. God removes powerful leaders from their throne and sends the rich away empty handed.

It is tempting to read this text from Luke's Gospel like this and see ourselves as the beneficiaries of God's promise. We live in the USA which is seen as rich and powerful by the global community. Do you know that we use more than our share of the earth's resources and we often feel threatened by immigrants who seek safety here? But yet we strive to reach out to those in need.

One of the most amazing things about this church that you do is that you are very active in outreach. You strive to give more than 10% of the offering to outreach! While many churches are struggling to just tithe, you shoot higher. Look around, we are a small church but we are leaving a big footprint in love and compassion for all of God's people.

So, who is coming? Who is the One we follow? Who is the One we worship? May we remember who is coming especially during this, the third Sunday of Advent. The reason for the season is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

Let us pray:

The promises of God are sure, even if they are not immediately at hand. Christ will surely come but it may be a while. Even in the face of suffering, we are called to believe that God's promises will be fulfilled. Mary sings confidently in spite of her young age and difficult circumstances that God lifts up the lowly and vindicates the pure of heart. Advent, O God, is a time to remember such faith. Advent is a time to trust God's promises.