

Christmas Day
The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

All Saints' Church
Year C 2018

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98

Hebrews 1:1-4
John 1:1-14

Merry Christmas. May the Light of Christ shine in your hearts. Amen.

I love the image of beautiful feet running along a mountain path as one of our first scenes of Christmas morning.

Feet running along a mountain path. Those feet are probably accustomed to such terrain-practiced, swift and deft. Yet, these feet are not beautiful- probably dirty, dusty, calloused, even maybe bleeding.

What makes them beautiful is the message they carry. After years of ruin, of exile, of lost hope, a messenger by foot comes to the people of Jerusalem, to a crumbling city in decay, to a people in distraught, and this messenger, an angel of sorts, announces salvation, comfort, and redemption to those behind the collapsing walls.

“You sentinels, you who are protecting a dying city- Listen!!! What has been lost, has been found. What has been filled with strife, is now filled with peace. Where there has been crying, now there is singing. Come and rejoice. Take note. Your God reigns. And all the ends of the earth will see it.”

Feet running along a mountain path to share the good news. We see the feet first before we hear the words.

Just like the feet of our own children last night in the Pageant. How beautiful upon these very stones, these very chairs, these very steps are the feet of our children in the waning light, announcing the birth of Jesus, born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, Christ the Lord.

Think about your own feet and where they take you and how they are beautiful because of the message they carry.

We have a lot of medical expertise in our parish. How beautiful upon the hospital floors, retirement and nursing homes are the feet of nurses, doctors, aids, chaplains, social workers, and volunteers, who bring comfort to those suffering or to those experiencing immense changes in their lives.

All Saints is the spiritual home to the American Legion Cheney-Armstrong Post #5.

How beautiful upon the rocky-mountains of war-torn crevices and bombed out shelters are the feet of our soldiers and veterans who bring protection to all of us so we can live safely in our homes.

We have many people in this parish who serve this country through politics. How beautiful upon the floors of town halls and school boards and legislative districts are the feet of our elected servants who define and defend democracy so we can pursue life, liberty and happiness..... and justice.

All Saints has deep rooted ministries that serve our community. How beautiful upon the counter tops of soup kitchens, community meals, food pantries, consignment shops, and mission trips are the feet of those who cut vegetables, stock shelves with food, send care packages to Juarez, fold clothes, knit shawls, and greet strangers as if they are new friends.

Think about your own feet and where they take you and how they are beautiful because of the message they carry....

And what is the message?

The message begins in the beginning of our Christmas story with Mary and Elizabeth. Mary, maybe as young as 12 or 13, maybe as old as 16..... is a girl, naïve, young, expectant, engaged to be married... until Gabriel enters into her life and tells her that she is to become the mother of God and the most highly revered woman in the history of the world. I love her first response to the angel, "how's that going to work?"

Yet, she says Yes. Yes. Mary is literally going to deliver the Word of God. We, too, in our own way, deliver the Word of God as our feet carry us through our daily lives. The Word we deliver is that God is loving, full of grace and mercy. We preach this message when we give to others from the source of our hearts. And what a gift that is.

And then there's Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. Mary travels almost 80 miles to see her, to confide in her, to take solace. Could it be that Mary might have some lingering doubts? Why wouldn't she? As she approaches Elizabeth, Elizabeth confirms that she is carrying the Messiah, without Mary yet relating to Elizabeth her encounter with the angel Gabriel... How did Elizabeth know? Unless somehow God had revealed the truth to her. Elizabeth through the Holy Spirit confirms both Mary's call and her role. Elizabeth listens, consoles, holds her hands, and invites Mary to lean on her.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to others is our undivided attention. When we listen, hold, keep vigil, declare unwavering support, and rely on the Holy Spirit, we become like Elizabeth. What is the message; what are we preaching? That you, whoever you are and

however you came into my life, are worthy. Worthy to be heard and held and defended. It's a God stance. A beautiful message.

Words becoming Flesh.

We can do this because as the Gospel of John declares, the Original Word, the Source of all Life, Reason, Wisdom, Purpose, Meaning, Inspiration that created the World, "became flesh and lived among us." The Word, beyond the dimensions of here and now, more than any collection of letters of the alphabet, the inspiration of creativity "was with God and the Word was God."

The Word became flesh and lived among us. A better translation of this, more exact actually, is that Jesus pitched his tent in our midst. Pitched his tent right inside of us, and because of that Word living within us, our own words of love and encouragement and support become Flesh, become real, become a message of hope and grace.

Have you noticed that Mary is almost never pictured without her son? When you see Mary, you see Jesus. And that's the way it is with us.... When others see us, they are to see Jesus. The gift we have been given; the gift we give in return.

A friend of mine, a pastor out west, called me a few weeks ago with a story that no pastor wants to tell. A bride was left at the altar. Literally. The groom just "couldn't do it; just couldn't tie the knot."

After the shock, this bride did an amazing thing. She told her friends and family and even the friends and family of the groom, to go home and make some food to add to the food already planned for the reception. She said, "we're inviting other guests; we need more food."

And then the bride, her bridesmaids and the pastor called places all over town- retirement homes, nursing homes, shelters, food pantries, senior citizen centers, and asked, "Could you please come to a party? I've been left at the altar. We have a lot of food, and I need you to come, and to celebrate with me life, if you can come, please; it's a lot to ask."

People came. Their feet carried them and there was a banquet, not much different than the parable Jesus told about a certain banquet. There was a feast, and those gathered, friends and strangers told the bride that they loved her. How beautiful upon the reception floor are the feet of these messengers who announce peace and who bring good news.

Our bride listened to The Word whose tent was pitched right into her very fiber, and she let its Wisdom lead the way. When we think of this bride, we see Jesus. When we imagine the crowd gathered around her, we see Jesus. Their words became flesh and lived among us. And in them we see God's glory, full of grace and truth. AMEN