Earlier this week, I was chatting on-line with my high school friend Keith and his wife Bonnie. They are expecting their first child with the baby due in about a week, but as you know the baby can come anytime now. Both of them are extremely excited about being parents for the very first time, but on the other hand, they have been highly stressed out, nervous, and anxious about what is about to happen. After all of these weeks, the waiting is almost over. Their lives are about to take a dramatic turn with the new arrival into the family.

With less than a week to go, they seem to have everything all ready to go. The crib, the clothes, the bottles, the diapers, the baby’s room is all painted and furnished. Just about anything you can think of, is ready to go. The only thing they can do right now is to just WAIT. The baby WILL eventually come, but we just don’t know when exactly. It’s “**almost here but not yet**”. We still have a lot to wait for…with lots of fear, excitement, and also JOY!

In the same way, we also find ourselves in a similar position as we enter into this 3rd week of the Advent season. Everything seems to be ready, the decorations are up, the trees are set, the cards have been written and sent, the retailers are doing their best to remind us how many shopping days are left until Santa arrives, so we better hurry. But we must remind ourselves…what are we preparing and waiting for anyway? Santa’s arrival or Christ’s? How much longer do we still have to wait? These last couple of weeks of Advent truly test our patience, endurance, and our spiritual discipline, as well as our understanding of what this season is all about. **Our waiting for the coming of Christ put everything back into proper perspectives, and our spiritual focus where it belongs. Focus on our relationship with this Christ-Child, and not anything else.**

The season of Advent invites us to “SLOW THINGS DOWN” in the midst of our busy lives, especially during this time of the year. **When we slow down, we pay more attention to the details around us, including the people.** We can see the fuller picture of how everything fit in together into God’s grand story of love and salvation for humanity…just like a jig-saw puzzle. We come to fully realize the ultimate purpose of God’s plan and appreciate God’s unconditional love for humanity.

Like the familiar story that we read earlier concerning the young virgin Mary who was nervous and anxious about what was about to happen to her physically, emotionally, and spiritually, this was a nerve-wrecking time for her, can you imagine? For an unwedded teenage girl who all of a sudden being told that she was pregnant with a child? How does this happen? This must be some kind of a joke! Who’s the father? But as we know, through the assurance of the messenger, that this was all part of God’s plan for humanity. This Messiah child was sent in order to redeem us (not to judge us) because of our human sins of the past and of the present.

God chose Mary to execute God’s grand plan of salvation for humanity because Mary said YES to God. She was will to put up all of the public shaming and even risking her own life so that God’s plan may be realized. Give credit to Joseph also for standing up with his woman, even though he knew the child was not conceived by him, but by the Holy Spirit. God has chosen the right persons for the right reason and in the right timing of all.

 Considering the context and the circumstances of the situation, this passage that we read earlier – which is known as the Canticle of Mary could very well be a song of fear and anguish, but give this expecting teenage mother-to-be credits for her courage and faith in overcoming all of these into a song of praise, exultation, and worship.

 Mary was NOT your typical teenager. She demonstrated her maturity and faith in light of her situation. **For once, Mary laid aside her own personal messy situation and focused on God’s greater plan for humanity. This was not about her, of what she would get out of this, but it was all about God and what God was about to do.** Mary sung beautifully about how it was an honor for her to be chosen by God to be the bearer of God’s Son who would be the savior of the world.

 ***“My soul magnifies the Lord! And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant, for the Mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)** What a “magnificent” song of praise and courage, and a great expression of **JOY** indeed!

Through the noble giving of herself in fulfilling God’s purpose and plan for humanity, Mary attested to the rest of humanity that God **can choose ordinary people to accomplish extra-ordinary tasks! Even when everything doesn’t seem to make any sense. Even when we say NO and reject God at times, God still say YES to us! It is worth all of the waiting!**

As the angel reassured Mary, ***"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”***

Through God’s providence, the seeds of faith and courage have been planted in the womb of this unwedded teenager in order for the Messiah was to be born. Imagine what was going through Mary’s emotion with all the anxieties, worries, fears of rejection by her fiancée and potentially being ostracized by the rest of her community, how would we react to all of these if we were in Mary’s position?

 Even in the midst of these unusual circumstances and challenges in life, God still chose Mary to be the one, in order to fulfill God’s plan. If God chose Mary, imagine what God can and will do when God chooses us today. Will we say “YES” the same way as Mary did?

**Through the divine choosing of Mary, we come to see that God’s purpose often lead to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty.** It may seem radical through our human lens, but just remember, God does not see what we humanly see. God invites us to see things beyond the superficial and out of the ordinary. God invites us to think critically, use our imagination and creativity for the sake of God’s glory and to bring honor to God’s name.

Through Mary’s extraordinary faith and courage, we have been inspired to confront our personal fears, struggles, and doubts with greater confidence and boldness. Mary has challenged us to magnify God’s reconciling grace and missional work through our waiting. Waiting for what? Waiting for the fullness of God’s Love, Joy, and Peace, and Hope to be fully realized through the Savior child.

In the other passage that we read earlier, the book of James also reminded us that we ought to exercise our patience when it comes to God’s plan and not to take matters into our own hands, like the farmers who would wait patiently for his crop to receive the rains from above. Who sends the rain? God does!!! How often we make decisions without consulting God first. We create various options for God to choose, instead of the other way around.

Through our patience in waiting and in prayers, God invites us to listen and to discern what God has to say to us. **It would be foolish for us to try to make things happen according to OUR plan or OUR timing, and not God’s.** We must humble our hearts, lay aside our selfish wants, and let God speak to us, instead of us speaking to God.

Waiting on God is a real humbling experience. It reflects upon one’s faith and spiritual discipline. Abraham was 100 years old when God told him and Sarah that they were going to have a son. How often do we failed to exercise our patience and discipline when we are waiting for the next train on the platform or at the traffic light waiting for it to turn green? How often do we failed to exercise patience when the foods are staring on the table before us, and we’ve indulged ourselves and neglected to give God thanks or to let others eat before ourselves? Are we really as desperate when we wait and yearn for Christ’s coming?

 **God is on a mission to demonstrate an extraordinary miracle upon those who are willing to wait expectedly.** Despite the extraordinary trials and circumstances that Mary had to endure, she demonstrated her patience and her faith in God. She has dedicated herself, her physical body for God’s use, in order to magnify God’s greatest gift for humanity. This was all worth the wait and all that she must endured.

 This is the heart of the season of Advent, that **we shall wait expectedly, joyfully, and even fearfully like Mary for the Messiah child to be born.** It is easy for us to filter out what we only want to hear or what we want to see (only the good stuff and not the bad) and to look ahead towards the coming reign of God’s kingdom, while we fail to acknowledge our own shortcomings and neglect to demonstrate God’s love. We’ve failed to exercise humility upon those around us who are hurting and falling victims of injustice and abuse of power and privileges. We have failed to acknowledge the state of bankruptcy of our human souls, in honoring one another and respecting the precious human lives as God entrusted upon us, through the days of creation and of the Messiah child’s birth. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

 This week once again, we’ve seen yet another chapter of human tragedy and hatred where 5 innocent souls have been lost in Jersey City, simply because of who they were as God created them to be. In times like this, and in light of the season of Advent, we may ask ourselves, where is God’s Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in all of this?

 Are these simply sugar-coated terms that we remind ourselves each week during this season of Advent, as we light a candle, say a short prayer and that’s it? NO! It is exactly in times like these that the light that radiate God’s Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love during these longest nights of the year, need to shine even brighter than ever before. This is exactly what we must wait, anticipate, and look forward to the coming Messiah child, who has come and is coming to us once again.

 In light of the tragic event that happened, which could’ve happened right here in our neighborhood. One of my ministry colleagues – the Rev. Casey Carbone shared his thoughts on his *Facebook* page earlier this week. And he has given me permission to share his thoughts with us, as we mourn in solidarity, meditate and pray among those who have tragically lost their loved ones.

 Casey wrote, **“*As we continue on this Advent season, we find that we arrive at the third Sunday, which is Joy. And while it may be hard to see such joy, it is there. It is in you, and it is in me, it is in everyone who is willing to work towards making a world where justice, love, peace, and compassion rule our hearts and minds. While I give thanks for the officers who responded quickly and lift up prayers for those who died, my greatest prayer is that we act, not speak. So go out and love. Love yourselves so that your heart is full, love your neighbors as yourself, and love so much that your heart is radically changed, so that hate and malice have no place to dwell.[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 Christ and ALL that he stands for…are what we are waiting for? Let us continue to keep watch and wait for the Messiah child to come, as fulfillment of God’s promises. In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 1:46-49* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Rev. Casey Carbone’s Facebook Page 12/12/19* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)