

Christmas Day/2009
Augustana Chapel
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Neal Collins, Pastor

The Christmas Story fits so well with the question of what it means to live the as a baptized child of God. Finn will be baptized this morning. Please pull out your bulletin and let us follow the active verbs following the decree from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered...

The spirit of Augustus continues to rule in our world, and raises his ugly spirit of domination, power, and control in the darkness of this world, as he did at the time of Jesus. Augustus energy personifies all that is anti-life, robs life, bleeds life, in contrast to the one who came in order that we may have life and have it abundantly. When life is not abundant the spirit of Augustus is present.

Baptized Christians are people of expectation, as Mary was expecting a child, so we expect and anticipate God is present in our lives. This is counter to conception that God is up there and we are down here. In Jesus, God entered into our world, his Kingdom comes again and again and again. We opened this service with the words "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Come, Lord Jesus. When we pray, we expect God is present. On the tombstone of Carl Jung are the words "Bidden or not bidden God is present." Baptized Christians live with an expectation.

Baptized Christians live with a sense of birthing. It is not all about receiving, it is also about birthing. Seven hundred years ago Meister Eckhart said, "What difference does it make for Mary to have given birth to Jesus if we refuse to birth the presence of God in our own lives?"

For baptized Christians, living in God's Kingdom can be as terrifying as it was for the shepherds in the field when the angel of the Lord appeared to them. Every time there is an angel story in the Bible, it is always followed up with "do not be afraid". The presence of God in our lives can seem to push us to the outer limits of uncertainty, the unknown, and unpredictable. We call this faith, and are invited not to be afraid.

Baptized Christians, even under the spirit of Augustus, can have the Good News of great joy for all people. The situations of life do not determine the spirit of one's soul, and their communion with God. We know Christ is the light coming into the darkness of our world. Joy is different than pleasure. Pleasure is an external situation giving us moments of satisfaction whereas Joy, the Good News, is the state of our soul regardless of the situations in our lives. We know as Baptized Christians we belong to God and nothing separates us from this love.

So, like the Shepherds, we say to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem, let us go to church, let us go to worship and see this thing that has taken place." Finn's parents, Ian and Laurie will make vows this morning on behalf of Finn. They will faithfully bring him to the services of God's house, be responsible to see he learns the Lord's prayer, the creed, the ten commandments as many of you did. Then Finn in the fullness of time will take his own journey to see Bethlehem on his own when he is confirmed.

As Baptized Christians we make known our faith journey and the power of God at work in our lives so others will be "amazed" as those who heard the Shepherds describe their experience. Then like the shepherds, we praise God for all we hear and see, for to us a Savior is born.

Merry Christmas...