

A Horrifying Advent

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Presence Litany adapted from Mary's Son (Luke 1)

Pastor: "My soul magnifies the Lord,

All: and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

Pastor: for he who is mighty has done great things for me

All: and holy is his name.

Pastor: And his mercy is for those who fear him

All: from generation to generation.

Pastor: He has shown strength with his arm;

All: he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

Pastor: We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Isaiah 2:4-5

4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord.

Luke 1:26-33 ²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great

and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Luke 2:41-51 ⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

Mary, the Mother of God, went through a rollercoaster of emotions – Astounded by the will of God to make himself known.

Troubled, afraid, searching, astonished, distressed, demanding and still she finds a way to treasure these varied emotions in her heart.

Luke does a marvelous and unique thing that none of the other disciples did as they wrote down their experiences of God in Jesus Christ. What we call the Gospels. These accounts are not a philosophical argument. They are good news of personal experiences and emotions.

We are forever in debt to Luke because he went back and interviewed Mary, the mother of God, to get a firsthand account of what she remembered... what she experienced. Mary does not hold back. She describes those emotions, the fear at the annunciation. (Fancy name for when she is told by the angel that she will conceive – more on that next week).

And as you search through Luke you see several firsthand accounts of various women who were disciples of Jesus Christ. From Luke we see clearly that there is no distinction between women and men in God's eyes, when it comes to faith, ministry and the church.

We get the same from Paul:

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

- Galatians 3:26-29

This is a huge statement! In Jesus Christ you are all like the first-born son... you get all of the inheritance, all of the birth

rights, all of the glory and all of the responsibility of the family name ... male or female. You are God's promise to a lost and distracted world.

For this Advent season on Sunday mornings we are going to focus on Mary's story – Mary's song. From the annunciation to the empty tomb. And thanks to Luke we get to see a female and a family perspective. The full experience of God from a mother's eyes. We get to see what Mary treasured and pondered in her heart.

Even that little phrase gives us an insight into Luke's interview with Mary. He is putting us in the room with them. As she describes to Luke the experience in the temple where Simeon and Anna made such a public spectacle of the holy family. We see the dreamy far-off remembrance of that event in her face as she re lives the emotions of it. Luke tells us... you could see that she had treasured, stored up, cared for those memories.

Mary does the same with a very scary moment. She gives us all the details all the emotions. The distress of searching parents!

Have you ever lost a child? Even for a minute? Can you imagine that day long journey back to Jerusalem? Can you imagine searching in the biggest city you have ever been to ... for three days!

She doesn't make herself into a saint. She recalls the distress, the angry ... concerned tear filled words she spoke to her 12-year-old son.

When they finally find him. He has not been kidnapped or injured. There is no reasonable explanation for why he was missing. Mary tells us that when she found him, of all places, in the temple talking to the elders. She is astounded. How

dare he put them through such an ordeal... ought he to have known what he was putting his parents through?

Astounded. Luke is capturing the emotion of Mary retelling this moment. She was not simply amazed. Oh wow look at my straight A student impressing the high priests and rabbis. They were *amazed* ... she was stunned, shocked ...horrified.

When has God stunned, shocked, horrified ...astounded you?

Doesn't He know what He is putting us through?? How could He?

Have you ever felt this way?

This is a very real and necessary emotion that you are allowed to feel toward God. Although Mary recalls that from that point on, he was really a good boy. He submitted and obeyed his parents. This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time she was astounded, dumfounded, horrified by the will of God for her life.

When have you been astounded at the events God has allowed to take place in your life? (long pause)

When have you been astounded at the events God has allowed to take place in your life? You are not the only one to feel this way.

We as human beings can not possibly grasp the will and wisdom of God to transform our lives. It is often only after the fact that we see the way in which the horrifying advents in our lives have shaped us for God and for our neighbor. God is the one who makes you walk in His light.

And these experiences that create these emotions in us of distress and anguish, astonishment and dread... they are often advents.

Advent - the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

The begging of something new. A whole new chapter in your life. God preparing you to meet the person you truly are, who he made you to be. It is often through the crucible of pain that we become our truest, most honest and genuine selves.

And now that we have acknowledged this emotion in Mary, in the disciples and in ourselves. As you leave this day, enter back into your regular routines ... what ever it is that next week has in store for you. God is going to place those treasures into your mind. God will place into your day and into your heart mind reminders of the stunning and sometimes horrifying events that have drawn you closer to him and closer to His will for your life.

Christ is here and He promises. He will reign *over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*"

God has and God is and God will reign over your life shaping you in astonishing ways. Because of Mary's story, Luke's story ... because of Jesus Christ you have and you do walk in His light.



James Tissot (Nantes, France, 1836–1902, Chenecey–Buillon, France). *The Annunciation (L'annonciation)*, 1886–1894. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper