

Covenant UMC Bible Study Notes-- December 18, 2017

for the Scripture readings for December 24, 2017

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

If you were to build a temple for God, would it be a building of brick and mortar or of righteousness of the heart? Where do you find righteousness of heart in the readings above?

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Image of a house of cedar (v. 2, 7): Cedar is a fantastic tree. Cedar chests are good for storing clothes because of their scent. They have longevity.

The royal house (v. 16): David's lineage.

God was a "portable" God—in a tent, able to go with the Israelites anywhere (v. 6).

A companioning God.

Historical perspective: this was the start of troubles. Solomon built a temple. For eighty years, northern youth were carried away to Jerusalem to build it. Under Solomon's son Rehoboam, it was too much. [See 1 Kings 12:1-20.]

History repeats itself. The Israelites had been enslaved making bricks in Egypt.

It is a construction of the heart. Shielded from our enemies—the worst enemies are those who invade our heart. It is construction of a place that enemies will not invade, building a place where the heart resides.

Like being brought back from the darkness of Alzheimer's. Do we give praise to God for medical science?

It's historical, also personal. Isaiah wanted a vineyard for his people, a place to abide in God. Each person is given a garden. Part is unmanageable. We want God's presence in our life even in the midst of hardship.

It is up to us to notice. How alert are we? We should be chasing God's love, running after it, can't get enough.

The extravagant love of God!

We can't understand it.

Luke 1:26-38

In the lectionary, this song of Mary is in place of a psalm.

What a disposition of heart Mary had!

To the people in Honduras, the reign of God is today. They thank God for things happening now.

A little child will lead them. The poor show us hospitality. The poor—the little ones—will lead us.

It was every young Jewish girl's dream to give birth to the Messiah. Luke tells how it happened. It was the fulfillment of an ancient belief in the culture. What is Luke saying in this narrative that puts Mary on this path? She "will conceive"—it hadn't happened yet.

How Jesus came to be—what does this say about God? This is not about biology, but theology.

In the conversation with Gabriel, Mary was told she had found favor with God.

Mary was humble; she did not question.

She was living in the moment.

Mary does not point out the problems this may cause. (Even something good may bring problems with it.)

As a vessel, Mary had an open heart.

It is amazing how humble she was.

An open heart is a broken heart.

Is it broken—or vulnerable?

We don't allow it to be broken.

A broken heart is a good thing because the heart can rearrange.

We can be vulnerable and not know it. A heart, broken once, becomes more aware of being vulnerable. We then need to be more trusting if we are to be vulnerable again.

It is like the image of a heart open at the top with a figure inside it. It is broken open, and the figure is embraced at the depths.

It is hard to be empathetic if you have never experienced what the other person is going through.

Luke 1:46b-55

In the gospels, it's called "mercy;" in the epistles, "grace." Grace has come to mean what God gives you to get you through a hard day. But it doesn't matter what happens: we should have mercy on everyone. So many people today need mercy. If I can give it, I will.

If someone is hungry, take them and have a meal with them. Don't give them money because it will go for drugs. "Can we go and have a meal together?"

But you might not have enough money for two people.

Mary is singing an ancient song. What was fulfilled in Mary, people had been singing for generations. Humble people are not necessarily lowly. "Humility is not about thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

There are people who need to be lifted up. Some people are afraid to come into the city. They think they are above that. Once you've been made aware, turning your back is the sin. Mary's song makes us aware.

Luke is an amazing storyteller, in the way he arranged things.

Luke is more sensitive to the feminine than the other gospels.

The genealogy in Matthew goes through Joseph, Jesus' legal father; in Luke, it goes through Mary.

Luke did not have the patriarchal attitude of Matthew.

Luke was an anthologist. I'm not sure all of the stories are true.

Are they true, or do they speak of a truth?

Luke had sources that Mark and Matthew did not. Was Mary one of his sources?

Then she must have lived to an old age!

In Jewish theology, when idolatry ends, the kingdom of God will come.
The politics of Luke—we don't have to solve all of the problems. Follow the God revealed in the small and lowly.

Singing is a form of resistance.

A documentary about Estonia and Latvia showed people singing the songs of their culture in resistance to the Soviets. They had a common language of music.

“Silent Night” is known around the world. During World War I, German soldiers in the trenches sang “Silent Night” and allied soldiers joined in.

All of this looks forward to gathering around the Throne together.
Sometimes it breaks through here.

Romans 16:25-27

“To God be the glory, great things he has done!”