

Remnant Life Church
November 30, 2014
“Coming Out of the Darkness”
(First Sunday of Advent)
Luke 1:5-22

(Following worship)

- Today is the first Sunday of Advent
 - Four Sundays preceding Christmas
 - Def – the arrival of a notable person or event
 - The structure and appearance will take on different forms in various churches and denominations
 - The central theme is most often associated with preparing our hearts for the second coming of Jesus while, at the same time, we remember and commemorate the first – His birth as a baby.
 - Music, candles, special readings, and fasting all may accompany the service
 - As with all events within the church however, it is not what happens on the outside that is most important, but what is happening on the inside of each of us that is of eternal value.
 - The first candle represents an expectation and a hope
 - We are going to look together this morning at the first part of that story of hope as it begins to unfold...

(Begin sermon notes)

- We look this morning at the series of events that initiate the Christmas story
 - We will over the next 4 weeks, ending with our Christmas service on December 21, examine the 4 who were involved in this scene
- The morning the first Sunday of Advent – Zechariah

READ SCRIPTURE

- One of the most beloved of all Christmas songs is White Christmas
 - Originally recorded in 1942 by Bing Crosby
 - Played so much that it had to be re-recorded in 1947 because the original masters had been worn beyond use
 - Why so popular?
 - America had just the previous year entered WWII after the bombing of Pearl Harbor
 - The song struck a chord with people because men were being sent off to Europe to fight not knowing when they would see their families again.
 - The song elicited warm images of family and love and being home
 - When their “White Christmas” came all would be “merry and bright”

- For centuries the Jews had been waiting and watching for their “White Christmas”
 - The OT prophets had, for nearly 700 years, been foretelling of a Savior who would:
 - Bring salvation to His people
 - Bring them freedom
 - Would forgive their sins
 - Bring peace and light to His chosen people
 - (Isa 1:18) *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*
 - The Jewish people were looking for their “White Christmas”
 - Isaiah told them that there would come a day when they would be cleansed white as snow
 - Their lives would be changed forever
 - But their waiting drug on year after year, century after century
 - All the while waiting under the boot of the most powerful people in the world – the Romans
 - The carol Oh Come, Oh Come, Immanuel even speaks to that anticipation but also to the struggle in darkness
 - *O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear. Rejoice ! Rejoice ! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.*
 - Words translated from the original Latin in the early 1700s while the tune is from 15th century France
 - This is the climate in which Zechariah encounters the angel

- Zechariah was priest
 - Of the order of (descendent) Abijah (1:5)
 - The grandson of Aaron and one of the chiefs of the 24 orders of the priesthood that David had divided
 - The time for his family line to serve had come (only a few times in their lives) and the lot had fallen to Zechariah to administer the incense offering
 - Jonah the guilty man on the ship
 - The disciples to select either Matthias or Justus (Acts 1:26)
 - A man in a family of priests could go his entire life and not be permitted to perform this very important duty
 - While he is in the holy place he has a close encounter – with the messenger of God
 - He is somewhat skeptical of what the angel is telling him
 - And why not?
 - Why should he, no one special, only in that Holy Place by the “luck of the draw” be a participant in the long awaited fulfillment of God’s promise to His people?
 - Despite his skepticism God still used him to declare the coming promise of light being brought into their darkness
 - We hear this as soon as Zechariah is able to speak again

- **Luke 1:78-79** (Zechariah's song) ... *because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.*
- Paul then takes that same thought one step further to apply that to how we should live because of God's light
 - **(Eph 4:17-20)** - *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are **darkened** in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned*
 - In other words – because of Jesus we don't live in darkness anymore (the way of the world)
- Jesus tells us to go beyond even that – heart to action
 - **(Matt 5:38-40)** *You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.*
- Jesus came that we might:
 - Change how we look at life
 - Refuse to a life of selfishness and pride
 - Not have to live life like those who are in the darkness
 - Reflect His light and peace everywhere we go
- Why would God have chosen Zechariah to play this important part of the redemption story?
 - His name means – **“Jehovah Has Remembered”**
 - God had not forgotten His promises to the people
 - He would then, He will now, and He will continue forever to fulfill every promise He has made

I encourage you to recall Zechariah...

- This morning whatever promise you are holding to – Jehovah has remembered!
- Whatever prayer you are fervently praying with apparently no effect – Jehovah as remembered!
- Whatever difficult, uncertain, trying circumstance you are walking through right now – Jehovah has remembered!