

“Anticipation Includes Excitement”

Genesis 4:1; Philippians 1:18c-26; Luke 1:39-55

When Eve gives birth to Cain – she says something that is not easy to translate into English. Most translate it as you heard tonight – “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” However, the Hebrew suggests that Eve thinks she has gotten, obtained, or produced “the Lord” (Yahweh).

She had heard the promise that the Lord gave after the Fall of Man into sin – that He would send a man to crush the serpent’s head. It would not be out of line for Eve to think that the Lord is now fulfilling His promise with the birth of her son. She is excited that she has gotten the Savior that God promised – but in time – she would realize that Cain is not who she thought he was.

Ever since the promise of the Savior was given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 – with each pregnancy – with the birth of each son – there was the question, “Is this the One?” Such is the excitement that anticipation brings.

You know what that’s like. When you are excited about what is coming – you are constantly looking for it to arrive. When guests are coming – the car lights coming down the lane, or a knock at the door grabs your attention. “They’re here!”

We hear this eager anticipation in St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians. He rejoices in the certainty that he will soon be with the Philippians again. You can sense his excitement as he awaits that day. While he wants to go and be with Christ – and is eager for that as well – he expects that he will return to the Philippians.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, after hearing that she will give birth to a son, goes to her relative Elizabeth’s house. She too shares in the excitement – blessing Mary for this wonderful good news. Elizabeth is filled with joy – and so is the child in her womb, who leaps for joy.

God the Holy Spirit reveals to Elizabeth that the child in Mary's womb is the One – her Lord – the promised Savior. All the waiting and anticipation for the fulfillment of the promise now comes gushing out.

The Lord is with them! Yahweh is present in the midst of them! The Christ is here! The child in Elizabeth's womb is already about the ministry the Lord has given to him. Her child is none other than John the Baptist – the forerunner of the Christ – the one who will prepare the way of the Lord.

Already John is preaching that the kingdom of heaven is near. Already, John is preparing us to behold the One who is the Lamb of God – who has come in the flesh – who comes to take away the sin of the world.

Mary's excitement breaks forth in song – Mary's Song – or as we have it in our liturgy, the Magnificat.

She speaks forth about what is, and what will be. She recounts God's mighty deeds for her. She sees how God has acted in the past – and how He continues to act for the sake of all people. She rejoices in His deliverance – how the mighty One has been merciful to her – and whose mercy is for all who fear Him.

At the end of her hymn, she says: “He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” (1:54-55)

When we anticipate something – we often go back and carefully review all that was said and know about it. When something new is coming out – people go over the specs, seeing what is promised, going over every detail.

Reviewing what was promised builds excitement. That's what the people of God were doing – reviewing what the Lord had promised about the One He would send to deliver them. Mary shows that her excitement comes from what God had said to her forefathers. She is remembering God's promises – and looking forward to their fulfillment.

Advent is a time of excitement because we are reminded that God's promises have been – and are being – fulfilled. Unlike the excitement surrounding worldly things – this excitement does not disappoint.

We see what God has worked at the cross – how Christ came to fulfill the promise and crush the serpent's head. We see how God has delivered us from the tyranny of sin and death. The Lamb of God sheds His blood – taking away your sin – a blessing that continues each day, for you are baptized into Christ, who washes away your sin.

And yet, like St. Paul, we look forward to being with Christ – we look forward to His coming again – that Day when He will come to take us to live with Him eternally in our heavenly home.

We look forward to that day – because it will be the end of sin and death. As Paul says – to die is gain, it's far better – because we will be with Christ, and the struggle of this fallen world will be past.

But there is still more to His promise. We have more to look forward to. He promises the resurrection of our bodies from death to life – He promises a new heaven and a new earth.

So much to look forward to – so much excitement and anticipation. And yet, we rejoice even now – for all the promises fulfilled when God sent His only-begotten Son into our flesh – to redeem us, to deliver us.

With Eve, Paul, Mary and Elizabeth – we rejoice in God our Savior – who comes to us in these days – who does great things for me. In Christ all God's promises are certain and sure – sustaining us in the one true faith – until that Day when we shall see the fulfillment of all His promises with our own eyes.

All glory be to God alone – now, and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.