



**THE MESSENGER**

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December 17, 2017

We continue through the advent season on this the Third Sunday of Advent. Today marks a shift from previous Sundays of preparation and hope and moves us to an atmosphere of anticipation and expectancy.

So far this season, we have heard many different messages about Christmas from believers and non-believers. Many Christians want to convey the message that Christ must stay in Christmas.

Today is the day that we share the message of joy and love by spreading the word that Jesus is the reason for the season to the people we encounter throughout this season of Advent, Christmas and Christmastide.

We live in a world that likes to send messages that provide information to keep people up to date on happenings. The messages from around the world are communicated quickly over the internet, cellphones, texting and with social networks. What took messages weeks and months before to get to another part of the world now only takes seconds.

The impact of words that we use can either encourage a conversation or stifle how one communicates. Sometimes a simple word can convey a thought that helps or hinders a conversation. Even when conveying a message to someone, a person may say, "I am just passing along the message. So please don't shoot the messenger!"

Even pastors are called messengers for sharing God's Good News of Jesus Christ. From high church to just plain down home pastors, they/we all share the same message of God's love. Sometimes, we have to be a messenger of hope and joy as well as sadness.

Over my many years of being a pastor, I have had to be the messenger of good news and bad news. I remember the time I was called to the emergency room early one morning to be with a family. I called one of the elders to meet me there because he was also a good friend of the family. He was startled that I called him at 2:00 in morning with the news and he was not sure he wanted to fill this request. "Duane, I just got a call from Carol, Eddie had a terrible asthmatic attack and is in the emergency room. I really need you to be there with me because the Berger family is going to need a lot of support."

We met outside the emergency doors. Duane was visible shaking as to what awaited him inside. "Thanks, Duane. I know this is going to be rough for you as well as for me. I want you to go be with the family and I'll go into the room where they're working on Eddie."

Carol gave the nursing staff the okay for me to go into the room with Eddie. After a short prayer, I entered the room and saw that things were not good. The doctor was looking at the clock on the wall and then writing down the time of Eddie's death. I moved to Eddie's side, placed my hand on his forehead and prayed over him.

I knew what I had to do next as a messenger of sad news. As I left the room and walked towards the waiting room where the Berger family was gathered, I felt tears flowing down my cheeks. I met Carol first and said "Carol, Eddie is now home with God." The anguish of his death quickly sent her into Duane's arms sobbing. The rest of the family huddled together in grief and tears. We had prayers together before they went into the room to see him.

That next Sunday, I announced Eddie's passing which brought sadness and tears. The next announcement was about the birth of a new baby in the congregation which brought joy and smiles. The message here is that "In life and in death, we belong to God."

Friends, Holy Scripture is the messenger of God's salvation story to all humankind. From the first words of Genesis to the last amen in Revelations we are given a message of hope, forgiveness, peace, redemption, love and joy.

We too must be open to the message from Jesus as we await his return. The loving message remains with us as we move through all the ups and downs of life.

The passage from Luke is a poem song from Mary on how God is working in her life. This is a message of affirmation as she magnifies God's presence in her life as the vessel in which the Savior is conceived. Her place in the story of salvation is significant as she recognizes the very depth of God's plan in her soul.

Mary's life is as a lowly servant chosen by God to bear the savior who is going to change the lives of people throughout generations and the world forever.

Listen once again to her message to the world.

**<sup>46</sup>and Mary said,**

**"My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my savior, <sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup>for the mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup>his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."** Luke 1:46b-55 (NRSV)

The message of this poem song, the Magnificat, lifts up three essential thoughts, "First, Mary's praise for God for what he has done for her (46-50). Second, she praises him for what he had done, and would do, against the oppressors of his people (51-52). Third, she praises God for what he had done, and would do, for his church (53-56).

The passage from Isaiah 61 conveys the message of the servant who would come to save the world. The powerful part of this passage especially for this

season of Advent connects the prophecy of old with the message of the Good News in Jesus Christ.

We hear the prophet Isaiah's word once again. **<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our god; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.**

My dear sisters and brothers, Jesus is the messenger of God's everlasting love and grace. He is the one who brings God's message of hope and salvation to the world. He is the one we have heard and accepted as Lord and Savior. He is the reason for the season. He is God's son. He is the reason for this season.

With the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ, we have the message that needs to be out there in the world. We are all called to be messengers of this announcement of the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus used the streets, the mountain side, the synagogue, the shore line, the homes and any opportunity to proclaim the message of God's love to all who would listen and all who are receptive to him.

We too can share this message in Green Valley or wherever we live. If Jesus lives in us, we have a message to share to the world.

Jesus is our Teacher and Savior. We in turn become messengers for him in this world and we should not be afraid. He gave up his life for us. So may our message of love and hope be conveyed to all who would listen and accept him as Lord and Savior. This is our time to remember the message of hope, of salvation and of love.

“Come to this sanctuary, this house, this home, Holy Christ,  
And let us receive you with lavish welcome.  
You are the Restorer of our fortunes,  
The Promise of new life –  
We pour out our praise to you.  
Fill this room with your Spirit:  
The sound of wind, the warmth of flame, the scent of perfume  
And fill our hearts with your compassion,  
Not just in this time and place,  
But in all times and in all places,  
So that as we celebrate the great things you have done for us,  
We may also embody the love you give to all. Amen.” *\*Worship Ways Archive.*

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Supporting Scriptures:

**Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. <sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. <sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. <sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

**Luke 1:46b-55 (NRSV)**

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."