

Advent 4C

December 23, 2018

Rev Ken Wratten at St Luke's

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-49

Elizabeth's senior life pregnancy most definitely caused a change in the plans she had made. She was suddenly no longer going to slow down the pace of life; retire in her 'golden years'; or even sleep in more. In her old age she was going to be the mother of a baby boy; and not just any baby boy. Elizabeth was carrying John; whom an angel announced was going to prepare the way for Israel's Messiah. God's Plan brought a whole new direction to Elizabeth's life.

Mary's teenage pregnancy certainly caused a change in her plans. She was engaged; planning her wedding, starting an exciting new life with the village carpenter, thinking about growing old with a little family in the town where she grew up. The angel Gabriel told her that she would bear a son, even though she wasn't married yet. That alone would change some plans. But even more than that, she was told the very startling news that THIS boy is the Son of God. She made herself open to God's plan, and that decision brought a whole new direction to Mary's life.

Mary thought about the connection she was sharing with her cousin Elizabeth. Their future sons would be in the leading roles of God's own Plan, and THEY had been chosen, above all other women on earth, to be the human links for this Godly plan.

Mary and Elizabeth knew that their own plans were changed, but for the best reason possible; so that God's plan could take over in their life. Consider this story of Mary and Elizabeth when your plans change. Consider the new direction you are being pointed to by changes. Consider whether those changes are happening so that God's plan can take shape in your life. Consider whether your response should be like Mary's response, "I am the Lord's, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. (MSG)"

A friend in our last neighborhood approached me about a week before Christmas a few years ago, to tell me about a feeling that had been stirring up in her - to 'really' help somebody for Christmas. She didn't want to give money to a big organization; she wanted to know where her money was going; she wanted to help kids whose parents couldn't afford a nice Christmas. I told her about a Christmas gift program that my former parish worked on with a downtown San Jose mission. If she would like, we could see if there was time left to buy gifts for needy kids in downtown San Jose.

When we called the mission, they first said that the deadline to bring in gifts was over; BUT there were 150 more families asking for gifts. They were going to have to turn them away. The gift from my neighbor was \$500. That much money would allow the mission to provide gifts for every family. When I told my neighbor this news, she cried. She knew she wanted to find a new plan for Christmas; and it turned out to be God's plan.

While in engineering; I have a plan: part time priest in order to afford to live; dot-com bust = no engineering work, was asked to serve full time at a mission needing business experience. God's plan.

3 year old Jackie died; mom pregnant for me; he and I – curly blond hair, birth mark, looked very much alike. Many couldn't tell us apart in baby pictures. God's plan.

St Luke's tried for many years, but could not support a full time priest. Part time required high involvement by members – not observers (strength); Rev Ardyss – wonderful partner in ministry (effective); accurate financial controls – Debbie, Dee, Ken all at once! – God's plan.

Upstairs of Parish House – after school academy losing money, couldn't fund it with grants forever; closed; allowed rental as apartment; found by a wonderful Christian tenant who works downtown, LOVES living there, reminds us when the sprinklers are left on; God's plan.

Christmas is not only a birthday party for Jesus; it is also a celebration that God has a plan, and God delivers on that plan – all the time.

Elizabeth trusted that her senior life pregnancy was God's plan.

Mary trusted that her angelic visit and invitation to a divine pregnancy were God's plan.

How good are you and I at trusting that when the unexpected happens, God has a plan?

Elizabeth felt her unborn son leap for joy: We have reason at the approach of Christmas to leap for joy. God has selected you and me for the plan that re-connects every person on earth to our Creator.

Our hearts leap for joy in this season because it reminds us that with God all things are possible.

Our hearts leap for joy because of the gift of the baby born in the manger who brings hope, peace, love and joy into this imperfect world.

We leap for joy - because our savior has come. Amen.