

December 15, 2019

TIME OF REFLECTION

“The winter is cold, is cold.
All’s spent in keeping warm.
Has joy been frozen, too?
I blow upon my hands
Stiff from the biting wind.
My heart beats slow, beats slow.
What has become of joy?

If joy’s gone from my heart
Then it is closed to You
Who made it, gave it life.
If I protect myself
I’m hiding, Lord, from you.
How we defend ourselves
In ancient suits of mail!

Protected from the sword,
Shrinking from the wound,
We look for happiness,
Small, safety-seeking, dulled,
Selfish, exclusive, in-turned.
Elusive, evasive, peace comes
Only when it’s not sought.

Help me forget the cold
That grips the grasping world.
Let me stretch out my hands
To purifying fire,
Clutching fingers uncurled.
Look! Here is the melting joy.
My heart beats once again.”

~“Winter is Cold, Is Cold” by Madeleine L’Engle

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “Advent’s Barren Wasteland” – *Kevin Schwartz*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Genesis 29:31; 30:1-2, 22-24; Isaiah 54:1-8; Luke 1:5-7, 24-25 (ESV)*

Genesis 29

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Genesis 30

¹ When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!” ² Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ She conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” ²⁴ And she called his name Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”

Isaiah 54

¹ “Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD.

² “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

³ For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

⁴ “Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;

for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

⁵ For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

⁶ For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

⁷ For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

⁸ In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer.

Luke 1

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵ “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”