

“Trust Me” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent 4 – December 18, 2022

- I. **Matthew 1:20-21** – “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”
- II. **Each year, dictionary companies pick a “word of the year”.**
 - a. Harper-Collins Publishing came out with their word of 2022 from the Collins English Dictionary, which is “permacrisis”
 - i. The word is so new that my spellchecker marked it as misspelled 😊
 - b. Permacrisis is defined as “an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events.”
 - i. A blog post on their website pointed out that this word is a good choice because of the war in Ukraine, challenges from climate change, political instability, inflation, [and waves of infections from Covid and other illness].
 - ii. We feel like we’re constantly on edge from dealing with one unprecedented event after another, as people wonder what new “horrors” are lurking around the corner.¹
 - c. I suppose we can move our focus from the world around us to our family and loved ones – which can seem like a permacrisis too!
 - i. My kids and grandchildren have been sick with whatever is going around – trips to urgent care, the ER, and bouts with pneumonia.
 1. My granddaughter Evie was in the ICU a couple of days this past week because of pneumonia and low oxygen levels.
 2. My nephew’s son was in the ICU in Denver last week with RSV
 - ii. Maybe your family has stories like this... or perhaps more serious illnesses or health problems that never seem to end.
 - iii. Some of you and your family members are dealing with financial problems – job loss – or have been impacted by crime.
 - d. Our troubles go on and on, barely giving us time to catch our breath.
- III. **In the Gospel reading, Joseph is dealing with one crisis after another.**
 - a. No, we don’t know all the details about his extended family, or the kinds of hardships he was experiencing from the world around him.
 - i. Yet, life was a constant struggle for all people at that time.
 - ii. A simple infection could easily lead to death – let alone childbirth and the dangers of pregnancy (there were no c-sections available!)
 - iii. The whole population was dependent on good weather to produce crops, and droughts often led to starvation.
 - iv. Whatever stability came from Roman control was offset by whoever was in charge of your area – and for Joseph and Mary it was Herod.

1. The same Herod who would seek to kill their new baby, forcing them to runaway to Egypt
 - b. As we read in our story today, Joseph was a devout Jew who is betrothed or engaged to Mary.
 - i. But sometime after the engagement, Joseph finds out that Mary is pregnant.
 - ii. An angel has visited Mary and told her she would bear the Christ Child, but Joseph doesn't know anything about it yet... So when he finds out Mary is pregnant, he's probably pretty upset.
 - iii. Out of compassion he decides to divorce her quietly instead of call her to account publicly where she could face public shame and maybe even execution.
 - c. He goes to bed one night, troubled by all this, and guess who visits him?
 - i. An angel! The angel tells him, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (vv 20–21).
 - ii. This is one of the great miracles of Christmas!
 1. Not the miracle of the Virgin Mary conceiving and giving birth to Jesus, but that Joseph believed the angel's announcement.
 2. He doesn't question the angel's message... He simply trusts God and takes Mary home to be his wife and the mother of our Lord.
 - d. And this news was just the tip of the iceberg for Joseph – as he would soon be forced to go 80 miles or so to Bethlehem for a census count and leave his home for several years in exile to Egypt to save the newborn baby.
 - e. I can only imagine that Joseph struggled many times as the Lord continued to guide him, saying, "Trust Me."
- IV. **We struggle through the permacrisis** of life with the same call... "Trust Me."
- a. As I mentioned in my sermon last week, we don't always know the answer to why we face these troubles... but we can trust that God is at work in facing them with us.
 - b. The constant bad news around us can feel overwhelming, so are any of you ready for some good news?
 - i. Instead of permacrisis – the Good News of our salvation is "perma-good-news!"
 - ii. The Good News is that Jesus Christ broke into our constant state of trouble and trial to bring hope and peace.
 - iii. The name Jesus comes from Yahweh saves, the Lord saves – which is the Good News that we are not left to fend for ourselves... or to save ourselves.
 - iv. The Good News promises that we are not alone in our suffering.

- c. I read a quote from author Dorothy Sayers who was the daughter of a pastor... she said, “For whatever reason God chose to make [humans as they are]— limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death. But He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine.”
 - i. Yes, God has never called on any one of us to experience anything less than He would experience Himself.
 - ii. This is the Good News of Immanuel – God with us.
- d. The bigger picture the baby announced in Mary’s womb, was destined to live a life of permacrisis, and ultimately die as an answer for sin and death
 - i. Jesus, God with us, was born to die.
- e. Whenever the trials of life seem too difficult to bear, remember our Savior and God, the one who gladly went the way of the cross to give us hope and a future.
- f. Whenever the trials of life seem to difficult to bear, lean into God as He encourages us with the words that He earned for us – “Trust Me.”

V. **Trusting in the Lord is not natural for us, but through faith we are able.**

- a. Yes, the world might be falling down all around us, but through our faith and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have this underlying sense of peace that says, “God is with us.”
- b. As we pray earnestly, seeking the Lord’s intervention or support, we are trusting Him with our lives and the issues we face.
- c. As we read the Word on a regular basis, seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to His will, we are trusting Him...
 - i. We relate to the people in Scripture who went through trial after trial and stayed the course by God’s help... and we read over and over the promises God kept to save His people... and it builds trust.
- d. And maybe one of the most powerful ways to build trust in God is by seeing firsthand the examples of those walking among us in the faith.
 - i. As we share with one another the ups and downs we face – sometimes with no end in sight – the experiences of others who trust in God build up our own trust.
 - 1. How many times have we seen the struggles of another and maybe even helped them – only to find that we sense the power and presence of God even more when our next trial hits?
 - 2. Lifting up and supporting one another is the Christian walk and shows how the Lord is there to sustain us through it all.
- e. When we say, “Immanuel, God with us”, some people might understand that to be Jesus who came along time ago, but is no longer present in our lives.
 - i. Nothing could be further from the truth... God is with us now by the power of His Holy Spirit... and the ways He gives us His grace in the Word, in communion, and our baptisms.

- ii. His constant call for us in the troubles of the world is not to fear as His plans and purposes may not be fully understood, but instead, “trust Me,” as I walk with you through it all.
- iii. In the name of Jesus, our Immanuel, Amen.

¹ Source: Greg Cannella, “Collins English Dictionary reveals its 2022 word of the year,” CBS News (11-1-22)