

**The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa**

December 21, 2008

The 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

To say that these are troubled times for the state of Michigan would be an understatement. Not only is our major industry teetering on the brink of a collapse, but our professional football team has passed beyond the teetering stage and may just set a record for futility. While we laugh at the desperate state of the football team, the state of the auto industry, at what would happen to our state if it collapses truly does horrify many of us.

Still, Friday afternoon, when the wind was blowing and just a trace of the sun was starting to shine....I found myself clearing the driveway, porches and the sidewalk for the second time of the day. For some reason as I was feeling the cold snow blowing into my face I was looking forward to July, and walking along the warm shores of Lake Michigan. In that moment, I gave thanks for the privilege of living most of my life in this beautiful state. I gave thanks for the glorious beauty that wraps itself around us 12 months a year. There truly is no place on earth that I would rather live. Even in December, Michigan is a glorious place to call home. As I say this, I know that many would claim other parts of the country, other places in the world as being even more glorious. They would rightly point out the glory that is present in the mountains, the deserts, the oceans, the forests. I suppose I have to admit that the glory of God does not dwell here in Michigan alone.

Our readings this 4th weekend of Advent are about the dwelling of God's glory on earth. The reading from Samuel reveals a struggle between the Lord and David. David wants to build a glorious temple for the Lord to dwell in. The Lord resists. . The Lord reminds David that in all of Israel's history, the glory of the Lord rested not in a temple made by human hands but in the midst of the people. The glory of the Lord can not be confined to a temple made by human hands. The Lord then promises that his glory will remain with his people for all generations. Centuries later, the Lord chooses dwell in the midst of his people in a new way. Gabriel comes to highly favored Mary with the astonishing announcement that the Lord wishes to reveal his glory in the flesh of her son Jesus. God wishes to dwell in the midst of Israel in the incarnate flesh of Jesus. This is truly glorious, astonishing news. God so desires intimate relationship with creation that God chooses to take on flesh and live dwell among us.

Now friends, I love Christmas, I love the cards, the songs, the hymns, the pageants, the manger scenes.....but sometimes I wonder if we have grown so accustomed to the songs, and cards, and customs of the season that we are no longer amazed at the truth of it. God, the creator of the universe chose to come to earth, to be born of a young, unmarried, peasant woman who lived in a village on the edge of the nowhere. God, the creator of the universe chose to dwell on earth in human flesh. God the creator of the universe chose to live and die a very human life.

As we ponder this incredible story perhaps we can get just a taste of the astonishment that Mary must have felt when Gabriel first came to her. How can this be? How can this amazing story be true? God would be born among us, live among us, die among us. How can this be? Gabriel answers us, the same way he answered Mary. It can be because nothing is impossible with God.

As glorious as this announcement is, I believe there is even more glorious possibility present in this holy season. God's embrace of our humanity in the flesh of Jesus lifts all human life. The incarnation is a celebration not only of the divine God becoming flesh, but it is also a celebration that in Jesus, human flesh, human kind becomes divine. In Jesus, we have been given a share in God's divine life. Because nothing is impossible with God. This glorious mystery reveals the truth, hidden, kept secret, as Paul says, from the beginning. The glorious mystery reveals that through the incarnation, through God's embrace of human life, God is revealed in the flesh and blood of your life. The glorious mystery of God is revealed this morning as we gather around this table and share this meal of bread and wine. And, it is revealed as you gather this afternoon around your table and share your meal. The glorious mystery of God is revealed in the journey of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, and it will be revealed in your journeys this week. The glorious mystery of God is present in your celebrations. The glorious mystery of God is revealed in those moments that go according to plan and in those plans that fall completely apart. The glorious mystery of God is revealed in the family members and friends whose company you will enjoy this week and it is revealed in those family members and friends whom you enjoy not quite so much. The glorious mystery of God dwells on earth---in homes and churches, in hospital and nursing homes, in prisons, in homeless shelters. The glorious mystery of God is revealed in the flesh and blood of men and women, of all ages and all races every where.

This is the true glory of the mystery of the Incarnation which we celebrate this week. Not only that God was born of Mary; not only that God chose to dwell on earth in the person of Jesus; but that God chooses to dwell on earth in people like us.

Indeed, as unbelievable as it may sound, even in devastating economic times, even with a dimly futile football team, even with cold and wind and snow, even in a world so marred with tragedy and pain, the Mysterious and Glorious truth is: there is no place that God would rather dwell than here, within our midst. There is no place God would rather call home than in the midst of this world.