

“God Is Up to Something”

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Good Morning! I have a message for you this morning!

GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING!

And we know.....that all that God does is good.

This is the first Sunday of Advent.

In Advent we expectantly wait for the One who has already come.

We anticipate the promised justice of God’s new world, yet we praise God who raised the “righteous branch” to rule with justice and righteousness.

We hope for the restoration of the afflicted, the tormented, and the grieving, yet we delight that healing has come in Christ.

We long for the beating of swords into plowshares, yet we rejoice that the Prince of Peace has appeared.

We yearn for the barren deserts of our inner cities to flourish, yet we laud the desert Rose that has bloomed.

We dream of the land where lions and lambs live in harmony, yet we acclaim the child born to lead us into the promised land.

Christ has come! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

In Advent, we are living between the first and the second coming of the Lord.

The tension of the word.....maranatha [which can mean either “Come, our Lord!” or “Our Lord has come”] — places us between memory and hope, past and future — and it can strengthen our Advent liturgies.

Perhaps we need to cling to the ancient cry of maranatha! and its opposing meanings so we may freely embrace “the new thing” prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 43:19)that God is doing among us right now.

The tension and contradiction we find in Advent shapes our celebrations during the season.

Hope has come. Hope is coming.

And God is up to something!

Sermon:

Did anyone have anything they were concerned about this week?

Have you heard something on television, or seen something on Facebook that causes you concern?

Are you concerned for our country and the impact of individual’s behavior on the world?

Has anyone been troubled by the behaviors or the choices of a loved one?

Have you been challenged physically, socially, emotionally?

Do you find yourself wondering how we,.....Christians.....can be so far apart?!!!

Well of course you have!!!

If you are awake at all.....you find many things in our world, in our lives, that give us grave concern.

We have many incidences where we wonder if we did the right thing.

We experience many occasions where we wished we had another chance.

And then there are the times when we don't quite know what to do.....or if we should do anything!

And in all these occasions, with all theseexperiences, with every disturbing incident.....

I want you to know this morning.....

That there is hope!

That God is here and.....God.....is is up to something!

We can accept.....as we begin the advent season.....that God is here.....and God is coming.

And in that....we find hope.

But God must get watery sometime!

God gives of free choice...because God loves us.

And sometimes.....we use that free choice to grab the next..shiny thing or the next big promise.

Or we reach down for that beautiful apple on the ground.....

And we bite into it to find that it is rotten inside.....

And instead of spitting it out.....we tell ourselves that it's good!

We even allow ourselves to be convinced that it comes from God.

Sometimes we even allow satan to whisper hate...and fear...in our ears and we say.....that's not what he meant.

I find comfort that ultimately.....Gods Got the Whole World.....In His Hands.

Throughout the often horrible history of humanity.....at the end.....God is there.

You see God does speak.....and the faithful do hear.

And because of our faith.....we have hope.

And God is always.....up to something.

When Moses approached the Red Sea.....with the mightiest army in the world on his heels.....God was up to something.

When Joshua was confounded at Jericho.....God was up to something.

Daniel.....in the lion's den....facing the jaws of death.....
Knew that God Was Up to Something.

In our bible we hear the stories of Hannah and the story of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem.....

Where God was up to something.

Hannah wanted desperately to bear a son while believingthat God had closed her womb.

In those days one of the greatest privileges a woman had was to provide a male heir to their husband.

Male heirs gave status to their mothers!

Barren so far,.....Hannah prays unceasingly! She holds on to hope!

And while praying in the Temple she is observed and told.....

."God is up to something!"

And she conceives and gives the world its first biblical prophet.....Samuel.

And in Jerusalem where Jesus has told his followers that "not a stone will be left unturned" in the great Temple.....his followers point out to him how well the Temple is built.....and how strong it is.....Jesus basically says: "Hang on! Watch out!"

God is Up to Something!”

But there's another story in there somewhere!

And this is a story of faith, commitment, determination and hope!

..listen to Hannah’s words as she shares how she knows.....
that God is up to something.

My heart rejoices in the Lord;
My horn is exalted in the Lord.

I smile at my enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

2

“No one is holy like the Lord,
For *there is* none besides You,
Nor *is there* any rock like our God.

3

“Talk no more so very proudly;

Let no arrogance come from your mouth,

For the Lord *is* the God of knowledge;
And by Him actions are weighed.

4

“The bows of the mighty men *are* broken,
And those who stumbled are girded with strength.

5

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,

And the hungry have *ceased to hunger*.

Even the barren has borne seven,
And she who has many children has become feeble.

6

“The Lord kills and makes alive;
He brings down to the grave and brings up.

7

The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and lifts up.

8

He raises the poor from the dust

And lifts the beggar from the ash heap,
To set *them* among princes

And make them inherit the throne of glory.

“For the pillars of the earth *are* the Lord’s,
And He has set the world upon them.

9

He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.

“For by strength no man shall prevail.

10

The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces;

From heaven He will thunder against them.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

Hannah had faith that God was in her life!

And because God was I her life.....she had hope eternal.

She knew that.....no matter how bad it got.....
That there was always God.

And when we have faith like Hannah's.....God can work for us, God can work in us, and God can work with us!

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Moses.....facing the Red Sea, with Pharaoh's army bearing down on him.....hoped.....and had faith.....and raised his rod against the Red Sea!

Joshua, as he faced the impenetrable walls of Jericho, had that hope....and that faith..... as he sounded his trumpets and gave a shout!

Shadrach, Meesach, and Abendnigo, as they were thrown into the fireknew that they were with God.....and had that faith,

Daniel in the Lion's Den and Jonah in the whale's belly....had that faith that gave them a sense of hope that God was with them.

They had that faith that gave them a sense of hope.

In our world today....with all that we are faced with.....our faith brings us hope!

The bible is full of examples of people on their last leg,people who were almost gone knowing.....

"When you're down to nothing.....God is up to something!

When you're on your last leg.....God's trying to tell you something!

When you think you just don't know what to do....or if you should do anything.....know that God.....is up to something.

And when we look to God in all that we do.....God's will is done.

In our world today.....with our wars and rumors of wars.....in our domestic and our international politic.....

We are called to know that "God is up to something!" And there is hope for the future...

Everything is gonna be all right.

Sadly.....some of us need to be "down to nothing" before we are able to see that God is "up to something. "

Sometimes God has to take away all control, all choice, for us to finally let go.....and let God.

And when we are on our last leg, feeling like all is impossible,

We turn to God and gain a sense of hopefulness.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to set our pride aside,..... give up our sense of control,and see that God has a plan for us.

We humans are sometimes quick to see ourselves as "down to nothing. "

By our individual standards, we each have that point we get to when we feel like we are at the end of our rope.

For some of us it is financial. Especially as we approach the holidays.

As blessed as we are, if we don't have the money we need to do the things that we want, to buy the things we think necessary.....

.....To give our children what we believe will make them happy.....

We feel like we are down to nothing.

At other times we feel like we are down to nothing when we have health challenges,

debilitating or terminal illnesses,

deterioration caused by aging,we feel like we are almost gone.

But in those timeswe need to remember that "his eye is even on the little sparrow.....and we know He is watching us.

In our despair.....we mind find hope as we look outside ourselves and think of what we might do for someone else.

Think of how you might be the sign of hope....for someone else

Think of how touched we are when we visit someone who is ill, or help someone who is down on their luck, and find grace and love coming from them.

There was a Christian professor who fell into deep depression.

He felt so discouraged, so hopeless.

One day a friend suggested he think of people who had been a help to him in the past and write a letter to one or two of them to tell them of his gratitude.

You see, when we hit hard times and are tempted to focus on ourselves, we might be called to focus on others.

We can do this because our faith tells us that God....is going to handle our stuff.....that we
are part of God's plan!

The professor thought about it for a while.

Into his mind came the face of one of his primary school teachers.

She had given him a real love for literature.

He decided to write and thank her for inspiring him all those years earlier.

Not long afterwards he received a letter in shaky handwriting from his old teacher, now in her late eighties.

She wrote:

“My dear Willie, when I read your letter I was blinded with tears for I remember you as a little boy in my class. You have warmed my heart.

I taught in school for fifty years.

Yours is the first letter of thanks I have received from a former pupil and I will cherish your letter till the day I die.”

The reply from his old teacher brought a beam of light into the heart & mind of the discouraged professor..... and he decided to write a few more thank you notes to others who had been special to him.

He wrote another & another until he had written hundreds of such notes.

By then his depressionhis sense of hopelessness.....was gone!

God was up to something!

Fellow believers.

if you are in despair or discouraged.....look around you to the needs of others.

When we are down to nothing! God is up to something!

You just might be that “something” that God is using to bring hope.

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God was up to something yesterday when we fell into despair about the world around us.

God is up to something today!

And we will see it if we humble ourselves and seek to serve.

God is up to something everyday !

So you might ask.....Just what is God up to?!

Well.....I can tell you this morning.

God wants to bring out the "God....ness in us so that we can bring the "goodness" to others.

God wants us to find the grace to be as Christlike as possible in all our dealings.

God wants us to connect our hearts.....to His heart.

And when we keep our hearts connected to God.....the "something" that God is up to is made manifest in us and is seen by those around us.

When we keep our hearts connected to God.....the "something"that God is up to.....will be the sure thing that is needed in our world.

When we keep our hearts connected to God we become the voices crying out in the wilderness that say.....

GOD.....IS.....UP.....TO.....SOMETHING!

Amen

