



## BULLETIN INSERTS

### **December 24, 2023 – Advent 4 (B) The Presiding Bishop's Christmas Message**

Hello to my family of faith in The Episcopal Church, and to all of our ecumenical and interfaith friends, and to all people of love and goodwill. I want to first thank you all for your prayers and well wishes this year as I have weathered some health issues. Please know that I'm doing well, following the doctor's orders.

I'm also ever more aware of the power of the messages of Advent to watch, to wait, and to listen to the pregnant voice of silence, as one version of the Bible says. And out of that watching, waiting, and listening, following the way of Jesus of Nazareth and his way of love, the Spirit of God being our helper.

So please allow me to offer a reading from the Gospel according to Luke. You know it well. The deep truth embedded in it, simple story of the birth of a baby. That deep truth has long given me strength for these 70 years, strength that I often did not have on my own. For some, it may seem fanciful, but in its own way, it points to what the Bible calls hope beyond hope. It reads:

While Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to deliver her child. She gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the guest room. Now in that same region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

The message of the angel is as scandalous and striking now as it was then. For in it is embedded God's message in the death and resurrection of Jesus: to trust and believe in the invincibility of the good in spite of the titanic reality of evil, because God is good all the time. To trust and believe in the enduring power of love, of truth, of the good, and of justice when the reality of the opposite seems so prodigious.

To trust and believe in the enduring power of love, justice, kindness, and compassion, all because God is love and the author of all that is true, noble, and just. "Do not be afraid," the Scripture says, "for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Lord, we pray, give us this sign anew. Give us the lowly, the tired, those of high estate and low, and those of no estate. Church folk, those who haven't stepped through the red doors for years or ever, give us all a sign. Give us the working, the watching, the weeping. Give us that sign anew; as you did in the first century, so now in the 21st. Give us the expected, the faithful, the passionate, the undeserving; give us a sign.

"The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: To you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'"

On behalf of the entire Episcopal Church, we wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and a joyous new year. God love you. God bless you. May God hold us all in those almighty hands of love. Merry Christmas.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church**

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