

A BABY CHANGES EVERYTHING

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Lexington Presbyterian Church

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SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 43: 18 - 21

18 Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

19 I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

20 The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,

21 the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Luke 2: 8 -14

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: **11** to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Just let me be the first to say it, "Happy New Year!" Alright, you are probably like me and have already heard the phrase dozens of times by now. But in thinking about that phrase, I realized that it puts two words together that are often at odds, "Happy" and "New."

New things often bring unknown qualities and unfamiliar circumstances. New things might present situations which could cause fear. Which is plenty good reason to avoid "new" things because it would make us just the opposite of "happy."

However "new things" are impossible to avoid. Yesterday, back in 2016, I was listening to a program on NPR, and as they were discussing something that happened perhaps 80 million years ago on earth, they stated the obvious - that the only reliable thing in the universe is change - otherwise known as the onset of something new - whether it makes us happy or not.

Most of us would agree however that the absence of change would be a bad thing. Few of us would choose atrophy. We would just like to have a little more control over the change in our lives.

Having control brings a great deal of responsibility.

That realization of responsibility hit Mary and Joseph full force when the shepherds walked into the stable, knelt down and started explaining about a vision of angels proclaiming the birth of the Messiah. It was one thing to have a dream or have angels in your bedroom talking of being the parents of the Son of God when you could keep it between yourselves. But when strange, smelly, poor folks, who would have no reasonable access to angelic - anything - suddenly start talking about things that you thought were only in your heart - then you know your world has changed.

Once there was a television ad - it might have even been for Hallmark - the catch phrase was "having a baby changes everything." A friend of mine told me that when she had her first baby, she went into the hospital to deliver as one person and she left a few days later with her newborn baby, as a completely different person. Her view of the world was completely different. There have been recent scientific studies that show that after childbirth there are measureable differences in a woman's brain.

Isaiah prophesied it thousands of years ago. The Lord God said, "See I am doing a new thing." And the new things that God does are impossible, unbelievable, fantastic and wholly good. Like the birth of the Messiah to a peasant girl and a faithfully devoted Jewish husband who was faithful enough to trust the Holy Spirit with his life and the life of his bride-to-be and her child. Control and great responsibility. And courage.

Courage is what it takes to face this Brave New World all around us each and every day. Think of those two new parents who had perhaps no resources at all except undeniable faith. Think of their courage to face this responsibility before them. And they weren't perfect parents. I mean they did leave Jesus behind at the church.

It will take some courage to face the challenges that this new year presents. But if I know anything about life, we haven't even imagined some of the challenges that will be before us.

What we have to remember is that who was born on that first Christmas morn, was Immanuel - God with us. Just as Mary and Joseph understood they had the greatest resource possible -- the love of God - and surely the trust of God to place Jesus, God's son, in their arms.

God with us. God's love with us. No greater responsibility. No greater resource. No greater protection. No greater source of love for us and this New thing that God is doing Each and every day. With Us. What a privilege, what a responsibility, what a joy! God's Love who came among us as a little baby - No better reason to celebrate this New Year. Alleluia!