

In the Waning Hours

4th week of Advent -Luke 1:26-38

In the waning hours of this 4th week of Advent, before we celebrate Christmas Eve, tonight, it is important to remember that, as Christians, we celebrate the birth of Christ for twelve wonderful days. Christmas is not one 24 hour day, but rather, it is a season of renewed faith. It is a time to enjoy and celebrate the spiritual awakening that we (hopefully) realized during Advent.

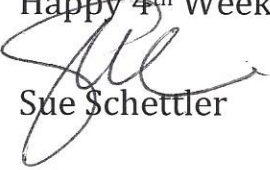
The gospel for this final weekend of Advent reminds us of what we will celebrate this coming evening and into the next twelve days. Jesus is the long awaited Savior of the world. The angel Gabriel has arrived this day to announce to Mary (and to us) that Jesus is coming. There is no stopping the profound Mystery of God's indwelling within the human experience.

Mary takes up the challenge of opening herself up and making herself vulnerable to God's will. The angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary, "**Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you,**" so inspired the early Christians that they began to recite it as prayer. This is the moment that the first Christians realized the profundity of the annunciation. The early believers realized that Mary was the first to say "yes" to Jesus. Mary was the first disciple. They also realized that this was the moment in time that changed the world for the better. From the annunciation forward, Jesus was here for all eternity.

So what does the mystery of this gospel mean for you and me today? Well...I believe that we are called to be full of the grace of God, to embrace the depth of the incarnation with each passing year of our life. We have just a few short hours till Christmas. We then have twelve days to celebrate and ponder the mystery of God becoming one of us. We then have a lifetime to embrace and live the words of Mary this day, "**May it be done to me according to your word.**"

My prayer for you on this last day of Advent, is that you might find time to dwell in the beauty of today's gospel and then in the splendor of Jesus' birth tonight. May you come to know Christ more deeply with each passing year!

Happy 4th Week of Advent and Merry Christmas!!!!



Sue Schettler