

SERMON: "PREPARE YE..." For the Promise." Christmas Eve 10:00pm

Rev. Geoff Ross, Friday, December 24, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

What are some of your favorite words? Words are important. Words help us talk to one another. Words help us communicate with one another. So, what are some of your favorite words? How about these? "Hope." "Peace." "Joy." Or this one: "Love?" Those are great words, but there are other ways to 'tell' people what we're thinking/feeling. We communicate our feelings by how we look/respond/body language/our expressions/actions(wave/open our arms). We also express our emotions/thoughts by drawing a picture/playing music/singing/dancing. But the most common/easiest way to share our thoughts/feelings with someone is through words – spoken/written. Words are powerful. Think about it: how do the words "I. Love. You." make you feel?

[On March 13, 1930, with global excitement/fanfare/fireworks, Pluto, an object in the Kuiper asteroid belt – was discovered/proclaimed the 9th "Planet"(capital "P")! But things changed! August 24, 2006/International Astronomical Union downgraded Pluto to a "dwarf planet."(small "p") Pluto got bumped/cut/voted off the island; rejected/demeaned/dismissed: One day Pluto was "in"/next its "out." This act became the 2006 'Word of the Year!' "Pluto"/proper noun became the verb "plutoed!" Definition: "To 'pluto' is to 'demote'/'devalue' someone or something." We know what that feels like: to be the wrong size/height/age/sex/shape/colour – and to be 'plutoed' by bosses/colleagues/friends – family:to be left cold/on the outside/looking in.]

Words – the action they describe/impact they initiate – can also hurt. Words lash/lacerate us quickly yet leave invisible cuts/scars that last a lifetime. By defining something words divide/separate/compartmentalize/segregate setting apart/aside those who once lived together. Stereotypes slice our shared nature into wedges to be used to stigmatize/set apart/aside – a linguistic form of sin. disconnect from being human. Rather than being used to help build/reinforce our common humanity, words/language can be/are used to fragment/teardown what connects us. Think this is a new 'thing'? Think again! The ancient story of the tower of Babel/Genesis stands as a metaphor for the power of words/language to divide. Words are powerful – they're also hopeful; like the word "Promise."

["Promise"/meaning: a declaration or assurance that one will do a particular thing or that a particular thing will happen. assure someone that one will definitely do, give, or arrange something; undertake or declare that something will happen. A legally binding declaration/agreement. A pledge/covenant. Covenant? Sound familiar? Bible:Old/New Covenant – promise between God/creation/us. But/what is this promise?]

Promises/prophecies that a Messiah/Saviour/Son – a King/Prince/Servant/Slave – would come to restore/redeem all of creation run throughout the OT, right from the "Protoevangelium"(Greek: "first"+ "good news"/"Gospel" – Genesis 3:15/first promise of salvation in the Bible.) in the Garden of Eden to Micah: Isaiah not only foresaw a coming Redeemer – a Lamb who would die to take away the sins of the world; He also called for the world to "prepare" itself for His coming – the message that John the Baptist was chosen to proclaim. The OT was about the "promise;" the NT, with the birth of Jesus, is the story of the fulfillment of those promises.

[2 more words. “For”/meaning: a preposition/sometimes a conjunction(followed by a noun). ‘For’:purpose/or a reason for something – can be used to define a relationship between people/objects w/to people or to refer to an exchange from one to another. “For” can imply an intentional/purposeful giving between people – as in: “this gift is for you.” “With’/meaning:preposition implies responsibility/agreement - arrangement/also defines a relationship/“accompanied”/“alongside”/ “together”/“among” – implies an “us.” These are words used by God in fulfillment of His promises!]

In the dark/a manger/God entered our world – Emmanuel/“God with us”! In the Christmas Reading/Gospel of John, we hear that “*the Word became flesh/lived among us,*”(John 1:14) telling us that Jesus is the/God’s Word! And the words/promise Jesus came to tell us are that God loves us!

As we move from the cradle to the Table, Christmas reveals the fulfillment of God’s promise to redeem restore/recreate His creation! But, looking at the baby Jesus, we forget this. His birth is the turning point of history – heaven and earth connected, God came to earth, God fulfill His promise to for/with us: but this meant more than just His birth. Yes, we celebrate Jesus’ coming to be-with us – but as we share in the meal that commemorates Jesus’ full plan/purpose for coming to be-with us, let us give thanks for what He came for. As God with-us, Jesus came/was born for-us/to live as-us/to die for-us/to rise for-us/to save-us – all because He/God loves us! This is the full meaning of God’s promise to/for us. Merry Christmas. Amen.