

Tuesday, December 11th, 2012

The Rev. Dr. Ted Kalsbeek '51, Pastor Emeritus Sycamore Presbyterian Church, Distinguished Alum '96

Scripture:

Psalm 33

- 1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
- 2 Praise the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.
- 3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.
- 4 For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
- 5 He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.
- 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
he put the deeps in storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
- 9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.
- 10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
- 12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.
- 13 The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.
- 14 From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth —
- 15 he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
- 16 A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
- 17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,

- and by its great might it cannot save.
- 18 Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
- 19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.
- 21 Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
- 22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Devotional:

As a time of preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth, Advent features music which is preparatory, such as "Come, Though Long Expected Jesus." There is eager anticipation of more celebratory music as we move from preparation to celebration in spirit and in song, joining the heavenly host saying "Glory to God in the Highest." All the stops were pulled out in that celestial crescendo of angelic praise. The beauty and power of Advent lies in preparation for the moment when the God of the Psalms would step into human history as our Savior and Lord.

Christmas and Advent have personal meaning with profound implications relevant for life now and eternity. The splendor and power of God's revealed glory in history and in human hearts now, is but a foretaste of what is to come. In a sense, all of life is an "advent" in preparation for the ultimate revealing of God's glory. Advent allows for a diversity of praise to be given to God. It recognizes the divine participation of God in the world and in our lives. It also declares the promises of God to whom we should gratefully give all glory and honor.

Let us, then, echo with triumphant joy that which the heavenly host sent reverberating over Judean hills, not in seasonal superficial happiness, but with the inner joy of salvation, peace and hope, enabling us to sing praises to God even in sorrow, to glorify God in grief, and to be grateful even in loss. Amen.

Prayer:

Gracious God, we are grateful that in your sovereign grace and power, the birth of Jesus Christ became a reality after long preparation. As we anticipate and then celebrate the Incarnation, we join the host of heaven in lifting our glorias in praise and thanksgiving. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.