

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

The Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith, Professor of Urban Ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Scripture

Luke 1:57-66

⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶²Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Revelation 22:6-11, 18-20

⁶And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

⁷"See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; ⁹but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

¹⁰And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

¹¹Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; ¹⁹if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Devotional

When grappling with situations in life that seem entrenched or irredeemable, the selected scripture readings provide important reminders about God's interventionary power. In the Psalter passages here (33, 85, 94, 146), the Psalmist celebrates God as majestic Creator who spoke the

world and its inhabitants into being. The Isaiah (33:17-22) and Revelation passages point to God's intervention as the sovereign Lord whose promises are sure to be fulfilled and whose judgments are enforced. And the Luke passage extols God's intervention as the incarnate Savior whose advent is heralded through the birth and life of the especially anointed prophet, John the Baptist.

God indeed intervenes in our lives and in our world, and those interventions are assuredly transformative. For some, God's interventions might seem unremarkable at the time, or they may even go unnoticed. But remember—a baby born in a Bethlehem stable might have seemed inconsequential. Those who've learned how important that was, however, rejoice.

Prayer

God, we seek your presence, for we need transformation in our lives and in our world. Let your loving kindness be upon us, according as we have hoped in you. Amen.