

Advent Devotional December 18, 2019

Scripture

Revelation 12:1-10

1 A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birthpangs, in the agony of giving birth. 3 Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days. 7 And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Susan E. Vande Kappelle '95

Birthing a child is a great portent. It is a time of uncertainty. There is potential for rejoicing, but also great anxiety. A woman so strong to carry a child to term is vulnerable at the moment of birth. To her the enemy is the unknown. What will happen? Will she and the child be safe, and what kind of help will be needed for herself and the babe?

On the other hand, dragons are dreadful creatures no matter how Jim Henson portrays them as muppets and friendly stuffed animals. This dragon in Revelation seeks to kill the child to be born, destroys part of creation, and wages war against heaven. Life can be seen as a fight against opposing forces, thus leaving us very little choice but to live in fear and anxiety.

But the Revelation to John offers more than an eschatological vision. It is another perspective about the struggles of life. The broader view of this conflict between the woman and the dragon reveals the saving love of God beyond and in spite of the battles. Not only is the dragon driven out of heaven by the angels, but also the woman and her child remain safe within God's care, and the future is secured for eternity.

We can choose to live in distress and fear in the midst of life's struggles, or we can take on the perspective in John's vision of a present comfort and great expectations. In this season of Advent, be still and seek the God who dwells in and around us, and find your own place of safety and well-being.

Prayer

God of grace and God of glory, pour out power on your people. Give your people wings to fly through the conflicts of this world and find saving help from earth and heaven. Encourage us—encourage me—to spend time this Advent seeking the Messiah, who reconciles all things.