

Behold A Virgin Shall Conceive...

Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 1:47-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

In this third Sunday of Advent, God in James 5: 7 – 10, the Bible leads us to consider the patience of the Saints. The patience of the saints is admirable, but what about the patience of Mary? What about the courage of Mary and the faithfulness of Joseph? The society at the time of Jesus' birth was not as accepting of adulterous behavior as we are today. Today if a young girl between 14 and 17 years old turns up pregnant, we may think to ourselves how sad it is that kids today are growing up too fast. Or we may wonder if she's going to keep the baby, put it up for adoption or worse have it aborted. We may wonder what kind of family life she has and if she will get any help from parents or grandparents, or if the father is old enough to take some responsibility. But we certainly wouldn't cry out have her stoned to death for her actions. In the case of Mary, she was engaged to Joseph, betrothed to him meaning as good as married. So when she turned up pregnant and there being no way that Joseph could have been the Father, the

physical evidence pointed to adultery. Lev 20:10 says both the man and the woman were to be killed. So then it was just a matter of finding out who the father was, right. Well Mary said the father was God! There must have been some consternation among the people of her community. "She says the father is God she must be lying." "She's only a girl she's probably afraid to tell the truth." But apparently, Mary didn't act like someone who was lying or guilty of doing anything wrong. She simply told the truth, and to the people who hadn't had a visit from an angel it must have appeared that she convinced Joseph and even her parents that she was telling the truth.

Isn't it amazing that Jesus was born at all? Look at how things were stacked against his birth, not to mention his survival to adulthood. Revelations 12: 1 – 5 isn't usually considered around Advent, but these few verses encapsulate the birth story of Jesus and even his resurrection and ascension into heaven. The dragon of course is Satan. Satan knew that Jesus was going to become flesh to make atonement for all humanity. Satan did not want the child Jesus to be born at all. He probably influenced the mind of Herod to commit that horrible act of infanticide we read about in the book of

Matthew 2: 16. But Jesus had been safely taken away to Egypt before that happened. Satan tried on many occasions to get Jesus to sin and failed. Then even at the end when Jesus died, Satan I'm sure felt that he had finally won because no one had been raised from the dead to any kind of eternal life, until Jesus that is. Jesus is the one who is snatched up to God and to his throne. Like it says in Revelations 12, once Satan sees that Jesus is out of his reach, he goes after the woman and the remnant of her seed. Well the good news is we are the rest of the woman's offspring. That bad news is, Satan is coming after us.

As powerful as Satan is, God is more powerful. Satan has been defeated, he is a lame duck ruler and he knows his administration's term is about to expire. He's going to do everything he can to delay the inevitable. He's going to attack us. He's going to try to get us to believe a lie. He's going to try to get us to follow a false Christ. None of this will work if we stay close to God through continuous prayer, bible study, worship, and helping each other.

Remember last week I talked about needing to prepare our hearts to receive Christ through the things we do for God?

In addition to that we are God's army against Satan and wherever and whenever we can defeat him in this world, we should!!! We defeat Satan by not letting him rule our lives. We defeat Satan every time we help someone in need, or introduce someone to the Living Lord.

Advent celebrates not only the birth of Jesus Christ as our savior; advent also looks forward to Christ's return as victor over Satan, and director of the restoration of the earth to its former estate of perfection. What an exciting time we live in---we are closer to Christ's return now than anyone else in history. Let it be soon Lord!!!!