

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT/DECEMBER 21, 2014 / TOM DEAL

“HERE I AM LIVING IN A HOUSE OF CEDAR, WHILE THE ARC OF GOD DWELLS IN A TENT” KING DAVID’S COMMENTS TO THE PROPHET NATHAN IN OUR FIRST READING. “BEHOLD, YOU WILL CONCEIVE IN YOUR WOMB AND BEAR A SON; AND YOU SHALL NAME HIM JESUS. HE WILL BE GREAT AND WILL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH, AND THE LORD GOD WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF DAVID HIS FATHER...AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE WILL BE NO END; THE ANGEL GABRIELS ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY; FROM TODAY’S GOSPEL TODAY IS THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT, JUST 4 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS. BY NOW, YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL YOUR SHOPPING DONE.....OR IF YOU ARE LIKE ME “NOT DONE ”. YOU KNOW I’VE DISCOVERED THERE ARE THREE BASIC KINDS OF CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS; THE FIRST; THE “**OBSESIVELY EARLY SHOPPERS**”; WHO SHOP ALL YEAR FOR GIFTS, BEGINNING THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS FOR THE NEXT YEAR. THESE PEOPLE MAY HAVE BEEN FINISHED SHOPPING FOR MONTHS; THE SECOND KIND ARE “**TRADITIONAL SHOPPERS**” WHO BEGIN SHOPPING AT THANKSGIVING , AND FOR THE MOST PART, THEY ARE DONE SHOPPING BY NOW TOO;

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AND THEN, THE THIRD KIND; THE **“CHRONICALLY LATE SHOPPERS”**,
LIKE ME, WHO DON'T SHOP UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE, EVEN AS LATE AS
CHRISTMAS EVE. NOW, I WON'T ASK WHICH KIND OF SHOPPER YOU
ARE,; YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT ANOTHER THING I'VE LEARNED;
NO MATTER WHICH KIND YOU ARE; YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY IN
THE WORLD THE OTHERS SHOP THE WAY THEY DO. AM I RIGHT?

THE POINT HERE IS; WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT, BUT ONE THING ALL
EXPERIENCED SHOPPERS KNOW IS; TO GET THE RIGHT GIFT FOR
ANYONE, YOU HAVE TO KNOW THE ONE YOU ARE SHOPPING FOR, YOU
HAVE TO KNOW WHAT THEY LIKE AND DISLIKE.....RIGHT?

IN TODAY'S FIRST READING FROM SECOND SAMUEL, KING DAVID TELLS
THE PROPHET NATHAN ABOUT “THE GIFT” HE'S THINKING ABOUT
GETTING GOD, A NEW HOME FOR THE “ARK OF GOD”. NOW IT MAY
HELP US TO KNOW THAT THE “ARC OF GOD” WAS THE MOST PRECIOUS
POSSESSION IN JEWISH CULTURE, A CONTAINER OR LARGE BOX THAT
HAD BEEN HOUSED IN A TENT.... FROM THE TIME OF MOSES.

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YOU SEE, FOR DAVID'S PEOPLE, "THE ARC" REPRESENTED THE VERY "PRESENCE OF GOD" AND IS THOUGHT BY HISTORIANS TO HAVE CONTAINED SUCH RELICS AS THE ACTUAL "TEN COMMANDMENTS ", THE ORIGINAL STONE TABLETS WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF GOD, BROUGHT DOWN FROM MOUNTAIN BY MOSES HIMSELF.

AT FIRST, NATHAN TELLS DAVID; **"DO WHATEVER YOU HAVE IN MIND, THE LORD IS WITH YOU"**! BUT THAT NIGHT THE LORD SPOKE TO NATHAN AND SENT A MESSAGE TO KING DAVID ; YOU FORGET WHO I AM. I AM THE ONE WHO TOOK YOU FROM THE PASTURE, MADE YOU COMMANDER OF ISREAL, DESTROYED YOUR ENEMIES; I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND FOR YOU. **I WILL BE THE ONE TO "FIX A PLACE" FOR MY PEOPLE.**" AND THEN NATHAN REVEALED THE "NEW COVENANT" GOD HAD IN MIND FOR HIM; **"WHEN YOU GO TO MEET YOUR ANCESTORS, I WILL RAISE UP "YOUR HEIR"; I WILL BE HIS FATHER AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME AND YOUR KINGDOM WILL STAND FIRM "FOREVER".** HE'S TALKING ABOUT JEUSUS HERE ISN'T HE?

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YOU SEE, DAVID'S IDEA OF A GIFT FOR GOD WAS WAY OFF THE MARK WASN'T IT. IT'S OBVIOUS, DAVID DIDN'T KNOW WHAT GOD WANTED FROM HIM. AND. IF READ ABOUT KING DAVID; ALL THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURES, YOU'LL FIND HE MADE A LOT OF MISTAKES LIKE THIS; EITHER UNDERESTIMATING GOD OR JUST NOT KNOWING WHAT HE WANTED FROM HIM. BUT YOU WOULD ALSO FIND OUT THAT; AS DAVID GREW IN KNOWLEDGE, LOVE AND RESPECT FOR GOD.....GOT TO KNOW HIM BETTER..... HE GOT MUCH BETTER AT GIVING GOD WHAT HE WANTED.

NOW, IN OUR GOSPEL, THE ANGEL GABRIEL APPEARS TO MARY AND EXPLAINS TO HER THE PART SHE WILL PLAY IN GOD'S PLAN; THAT SAME PLAN WE JUST HEARD ABOUT, THE PLAN NATHAN REVEALED TO KING DAVID. BUT IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT WITH MARY THAN IT WAS WITH DAVID. AT FIRST SHE'S AFRAID AND CONFUSED BY THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE, BUT WHO WOULDN'T BE....IT'S IN HER RESPONSE TO GABRIEL THAT WE DISCOVER MARY'S TRUE FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD; **"BEHOLD, I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD. MAY IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD"!**

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IN SO MANY WAYS, MARY GIVES US A PERFECT EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW;
SHE TRUSTED GOD BECAUSE SHE KNEW GOD.....AND IF HE ASKED THIS
OF HER, SHE JUST KNEW, THROUGH FAITH, THAT IT WAS THE
RIGHT THING TO DO. SHE TRUSTED GOD....LIKE HE LOVED
HER.....UNCONDITIONALLY! AND THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS FOR US
TODAY. GOD WANTS NOTHING BUT THE BEST FOR US, BECAUSE
HE LOVES US TOO....UNCONDITIONALLY. HE WANTS TO GIVE US ALL
THAT IS GOOD.... HIS PLAN FOR US, LIKE THE PLAN HE HAD FOR KING
DAVID AND MARY, IS ALWAYS FOR "OUR GOOD" EVEN IF WE
DON'T RECOGNIZE IT. NOW, GOD MAY NOT SEND AN ANGEL OR EVEN
A PROFIT TO GIVE US THE DIRECTION WE SEEK IN OUR LIVES,
BUT HE DOES SPEAK TO US IN OTHER WAYS....., HERE AT MASS, USING
COMMON EVERYDAY PEOPLE LIKE ME OR FATHER _____. HE
USES OTHERS..... WHERE WE WORK, IN OUR FAMILY AND EVEN
COMPLETE STRANGERS. AND YOU KNOW, HE DOESN'T ALWAYS USE
WORDS TO TEACH US.....SOMETIMES GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH
THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS OR THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES HE PLACES
BEFORE US;

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AND HERE IS THE GOOD PART; HE MAY EVEN USE US....TO BE AN EXAMPLE OR EVEN HIS VOICE TO OTHERS...HIS VOICE OF KINDNESS, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, HOPE OR FAITH TO THOSE WHO MAY NEED IT THE MOST, AND THERE IS NO BETTER TIME BE THAT VOICE OR THAT EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS THAN CHRISTMAS.HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE SAYING THAT “WE....ARE THE ONLY BIBLE SOME PEOPLE WILL EVER READ”. IT FITS HERE.

SO, THE MESSAGE FOR US TODAY IS; MY PRAYER FOR US TODAY IS THAT WE GROW IN KNOWLEDGE, LOVE AND RESPECT OF GOD, JUST AS DAVID DID.....THAT WE USE THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON TO COME TO KNOW AND TRUST GOD, JUST AS MARY DID.... AND FINALLY, THAT WE GIVE GOD THE PERFECT GIFT THIS CHRISTMAS..... BY SHARING HIS LOVE, IN WORD AND DEED, WITH THOSE WE KNOW AND LOVE.

MAY WE ALL SHARE GOD’S PLAN OF PEACE AND JOY FOR THE WORLD.... THROUGH OUR CELEBRATION OF JESUS AT CHRISTMAS.