

Rev. Lacey Hunter
December 20, 2020
Advent 4: Revolutionary Love
Christmas Pageant: Words of Preparation

Today we are invited to worship—to encounter and praise God—through a practice best known as a Christmas pageant. In this practice we gather together to collectively unfold the sacred story of God’s incarnation. This practice is a reminder that the incarnation of God—God becoming flesh and dwelling among and within us—is not a one-time occurrence. This story is always unfolding within us and all around us.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, as we wait expectantly for God’s Hope, Peace, Joy and Love to come into this world, we are called into the story. We are called into the story of God’s revolutionarily love, where the presence of God with us was revealed in the birth of a baby who could turn the world upside-down for love. We are called into the story of the beloved community who watched and waited and gathered together to nurture and support Jesus. They were a community of unexpected characters from every kind of background, who, amidst temptations, denials, fears and systems of oppression, found their way to the place where God’s heart was being born anew into this world. This is the story we are invited into today, the story of God’s powerful vulnerability and the capacity of such vulnerability to change the world for love.

Faced with pandemics of COVID, racism and fear and hatred played out with political power, this story of vulnerable, unexpected, revolutionary love is a story we need. So we gather here today, to learn from our faith ancestors who pondered, watched, traveled and brought God’s presence among us to light, and we claim our role in bringing God’s love and justice into the world anew this day.

This pageant, this story-telling practice, is for all of us, needs all of us to make its dreams reality. Everyone is invited to help tell the story. There are no rules for who you are in the story. No gender expectations or age limitations. If the story of Christmas tells us anything, it is perhaps that there is no one too small or insignificant, too excluded or marginalized, too busy or too sad to have a role in God becoming human. In fact, it is our very humanness today that shares in God’s holiness.

In a moment, I will share a brief description of each character. As you listen, notice if a particular character catches your attention, compels you or challenges you. There is much to learn from each of these characters. Who are you called to be in the story of God’s unfolding love?

Are you called to be Mary who said “Yes” to impossibility? Mary, whose name means, “rebellion,” and whose whole being was committed to bringing to life visions of justice and peace? Are you being called to co-create with God? Are you imagining ways to bring love to birth? Are you being called to make room for the Divine spark within? Then perhaps Mary is for you this day.

Are you called to be Joseph, who broke social norms and expectations because he came to believe a new way was possible? Are you being called to journey alongside and stand in solidarity with those who are bringing forth a new way? Are you the one who holds the hand of those in pain? Who supports those laboring? Who wipes the brow of those made weary by their work? Then perhaps Joseph is for you this day.

Are you called to be the baby Jesus, opening your heart more and more each day to this world? Are you called to show your strength through vulnerability? Are you being called to honor your own basic needs of nourishment and rest so that you might grow into God's redeeming love? Are you being called to love the fleshiest parts of humanity back to life? Then perhaps Jesus is for you this day.

Are you like the animals, who saw Jesus as their relative? Are you being called to make space for the unexpected and become a birthplace of God's Love? Are you being called to open your life to those in need of shelter, warmth and safety? Then perhaps the animals are for you this Christmas.

Are you called to be the Shepherds, those who look to the sky in wonder? Are you being called to listen to the Good News that sings on the wind? Are you being called to make haste and follow the dream of God's love in-breaking? Then perhaps the Shepherds are for you this day.

Are you called to be the angels, those who proclaim the Good News? Are you being called to sing visions of a new world filled with good will and peace? Are you being called to be a messenger who reminds us that no matter how fearful the night, that we do not need to be afraid? Then perhaps the angels are for you this day.

These are the beloved, complicated characters who God beckoned with a star to the manger, the place of refuge, that dark night long ago. These are the characters we are called to embody again today and every day, so that we might proclaim and embody the good news of Emmanuel—God With Us.

In a moment, we will enter our story with song. Here is how you can help tell the story:

- As I narrate, I will invite different characters to unmute and read aloud the words that will appear on the screen. If for example, you heard the descriptions and felt, "Today I am a shepherd," then you will listen for the moment the shepherds arrive in the story and read the words that will appear in bold on the screen. I will also invite different motions and gestures throughout the story for different characters. Please participate in whatever ways bring you joy. If you do participate in a speaking role, please remember to mute yourself afterwards. Our Tech Team will also assist with this.

-If you are able, I invite you to now change your Zoom name to your characters' name. So your name will now read, "Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, Shepherd, Angel, or Animal."

Let us become God's unfolding Love.