

Dec 6 - Advent 2 morning worship 10.45am

Luke 1:11-15a & 2:8-18 The unexpected announcement

last week's challenge....

What were they doing?

Zech – doing his job as priest – probably a rare privilege that didn't come round that often. Maybe he was particularly conscious of the presence of God. Or maybe it was just a routine. We can't know...

Mary – waiting to be married – no doubt going about her daily chores, thinking about her wedding, thinking about who knows. Was she praying? Or was she just going about her daily round?

Shepherds – doing their job. Maybe cold, sitting round their fire, chatting, telling stories, reminding themselves of the good times, maybe plotting to overthrow the Romans, maybe they'd been recruited by the zealots... I doubt they were being particularly spiritual!

And then, for each one, something extraordinary happens that throws their rhythm, throws their whole world upside down.

Have that ever happened to you? Your world thrown inside out? you ever heard?

The OT has quite a few instances of Angels -

Cherubim at garden of Eden

visiting Abraham (Angel = God?)

Judges 2 – angel of the Lord speaks to the people (God?)

Angel speaks to Gideon; later “The Lord said to Gideon”

Samson –

Daniel – Angel Gabriel comes to D

They are messengers of God, or God himself...

not usually named: the angel says to Manoah & wife of his name “it is too wonderful”

Silence for centuries

Then – all in a rush – the angels get busy again. God is on the move and things need explaining, people need to hear some important stuff.

The angel Gabriel gets busy.

Zechariah

Mary

Angel also to

Joseph

shepherds

What's unexpected? The Israelites were expecting a messiah – we thought about that last week. The promised Messiah was coming and his arrival was announced – but this Messiah didn't fit the expectations; and the announcement of his arrival was unexpected too: it wasn't to the leaders, the political top, the pharisees, the priests...

Throughout the OT God deals with his people through generally ordinary, flawed, broken people who become leaders, judges, prophets. They're people who just do what they understand God wants them to get on with. Despite their protestations or acknowledged weaknesses.

Unless we are very unusual, we get ourselves so caught up in living life that we don't hear God's voice (whatever it may sound like) and then we don't expect it and so we get into a downward spiral and don't hear because we don't expect, so we don't hear. We carry on with our regular lives and lose that connection so easily.

What happened when you heard God's call on your life?

Can you remember? Was it a moment of sudden understanding, or was it a slow dawning of faith? Everyone's different...

For all of us though: his unexpected announcement is that there is a Messiah and he's for us. Not only that, but he wants each of us to play our part in his kingdom project.

He wants us to hear the same voice that Jesus heard: “you are my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased...”

Perhaps you’ve never quite heard it that way.

We may be in a bad place; damaged relationships, hurt, anger... He wants us to hear the voice that says “comfort my people...” – the damage done can be healed – the hurt can be healed. There is healing for us – maybe spiritual, maybe emotional, maybe mental, maybe physical... He wants us to hear that we are “precious and honoured in his sight” (Is 43:4)

God’s announcement to us in our humdrum, ordinary lives, is that each one of us is of immense value and when we feel like giving up, when we feel we’ve let him or others down too many times, when we’re tired of dealing with what’s going on – this is what he wants: he wants to gather us in his arms of love, lift us, carry us like on eagle’s wings.

Can we build a habit of expectation?

God is at work in the world – it’s often said that what he wants is people to join in with what he’s already up to.

So – this week’s challenge! Let’s find time to sit quietly with God, expectantly.

1: Isaiah 43:1-7 – put your name in. Let him speak those words to you
2: give him the opportunity to open our hearts and minds to something he’s wanting us to join in with. As last week, maybe just a phone call ... or something more significant.