

“Mary Did You Know”

Advent 3 – December 17, 2006

Rev. Kerry P. Maurer

*(Carolyn Demarest, a member of St. Luke Church, provided the following update at the beginning of the message time.)*

Good morning, I am Carolyn DeMarest. Many of you have been asking about how our adoption is going since we all thought our daughter would be home by Christmas. I wanted to take a little time to fill you in. For some reason all the adopting parents have been backed up. We now expect expect to bring her home sometime around September 2007. We don't have any information about her or even a picture. Our child has not been assigned to us yet, and she may not even be born. Which is, maybe, a good thing since we won't miss her first Christmas.

I want to talk to you about something else today. You know how in discussions about your interests or activities there are common expressions. For example: in golf there is “bogey,” or “birdie,” or “fore;” and in fishing there is “the big one that got away.” Well, in the adoption circle there is: “GUZ #” - the number you are assigned when your dossier is logged into Guangzou, China and you are officially in line; “Bonding issues,” the things we think about, read about, research and discuss so that our child can bond to us as parents; “in the wait,” time when all the paperwork is completely finished, everything that can be done is done, and all that there is left to do is WAIT; and finally, “Gotcha Day,” the day your baby is placed in your arms for the first time, and she is legally your child. And in our case, “FCC,” families with children from China, that form local support groups for get-togethers and events.

Recently I heard a new expression that made me feel most uncomfortable, “empty armed.” When I first heard it gave me the chills. I suddenly realized that I've never felt as if my arms were empty. Of course there's the obvious reasons like my wonderful husband and loving family, my mom & dad, grandmother, brother and sister, nieces and nephews including Lauren who was born this past October and certainly keeps all of our attention. Then there's my home where there's two horses, a big black Labrador retriever and three cats. Let's just say my arms are never empty there either. And yet the term “empty arms” is common in the adoption circle. I had to ask myself, what do I have that makes me feel this way, and it occurred to me: “my church family”

I've been active in many church activities. As you all know, between Pastor Kerry, Pastor Jeff, Cynthia, Amy and Mike, we all have a purpose and a talent or skill that they will happily put to good use. Sometimes to the point of, “where the coffee, I just need cup of coffee!” But always it's for the purpose of serving our Lord, which is why we all do it with such happy hearts. And, of course, there's “NFT Awakenings” (the 9:15 praise band) and a choir where I can express my feelings and faith most comfortably through music. But there is more ... YOU.

You are our church family. Your children surround us with their joy. You overwhelm me sometimes when I think of all your thoughts, cards, prayers, love and support. You have made “the wait” feel more like advent. We excitedly prepare! We know it’s coming! There is much to do to get ready! We happily await the day of celebration!

But we never feel “empty armed.” Thank You!

*(Pastor Maurer then introduced the idea of what Mary’s thoughts may have been when she gazed upon the face of her infant son.*

One of the most poignant moments in the life of a parent is the first time they gaze into their child’s face. And the thoughts of “what will be” flood our minds. And there is no way of knowing “what will be,” other than that there will be joys, and sorrows; successes and failures and all that life will bring. Carolyn spoke so beautifully of this advent time in her life ... awaiting the arrival of their child. Not knowing what the future will bring, but waiting patiently and faithfully for whatever the Lord has in store.

We might think this morning of Mary and Joseph, and their advent of waiting and wondering. The proclamations of the angels revealed that they would play a part in the God’s history for his people unlike anything ever in creation. And yet, could Mary ever really know what she gazed upon in the face of her tiny baby.

*The song, “Mary, Did You Know,” provides the background for a video clip featuring scenes from the upcoming motion picture, “The Nativity Story.” Below are the words to the song. The video clip may be viewed at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=iZcVA9klMjY>.)*

Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Would one day walk on water?  
Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know, that your baby boy  
Has come to make you new?  
This Child that you delivered,  
Will soon deliver you!

Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Will give sight to the blind man?  
Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Would calm a storm with His hand?

Did you know, that your baby boy  
Has walked where angels trod

And when you kiss your little baby,  
You've kissed the face of God?  
Oh, Mary did you know?  
Mary did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear,  
The dead will live again,  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak  
Praises of the Lamb?

Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Is Lord of all creation?  
Mary did you know, that your baby boy  
Will one day rule the nations?

Did you know, that your baby boy  
Was Heaven's perfect Lamb?  
And this sleeping Child you're holding  
Is the Great I AM

~ Words by Mark Lowry ~  
~ Music by Buddy Greene ~