

Mary's Story – A Journey of Faith

Advent 2009

Matthew 1:19-25; Luke 2:1-5

Christmas Eve, 2009

Devotional

- What a disciples does – Service to God and others
 - ✓ Luke 2:6-7 = Her service to God (Jesus) = Service even when difficult
 - ✓ Luke 2:16-20 = Her service to others (shepherds) = Service even when inconvenient
- What a disciples receives – Peace with and peace of God by faith
 - ✓ How can you have peace when you give birth and have to place your baby in a manger (2:7)? = Because you trust God that this child is the “son of the Most High” (1:32)
 - ✓ How can you have peace when angels appear in the winter night (2:9)? = Because you trust God in His revelation that this is “A Savior...Christ the Lord.” (2:11)
 - ✓ How can you have peace when strangers show up to visit you shortly after you’ve given birth (2:16)? = Because you trust that God’s glory is greater than your difficulty (2:20)
 - ✓ Peace is God’s gift to those who trust Him – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”
- The story of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and “Christmas Bells”
 - ✓ Henry married Frances Appleton on July 13th 1843, and they settled down in the historic Craigie House overlooking the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They were blessed with five children– Charles, Ernest, Alice, Edith, and Allegra.
 - ✓ Tragedy struck both the nation and the Longfellow family in 1861 – the beginning of the Civil War in April and the death of Frances in July.
 - ✓ After trimming some of seven year old Edith’s beautiful curls, Fanny decided to preserve the clippings in sealing wax. Melting a bar of sealing wax with a candle, a few drops fell unnoticed upon her dress igniting the light material of Fanny’s dress– immediately wrapping her in flames.
 - ✓ In her attempt to protect Edith and Allegra, she ran to Henry’s study in the next room, where Henry frantically attempted to extinguish the flames with a nearby, but undersized throw rug.

- ✓ Failing to stop the fire with the rug, he tried to smother the flames by throwing his arms around Frances— severely burning his face, arms, and hands. Fanny Longfellow died the next morning. Too ill from his burns and grief, Henry did not attend her funeral.
- ✓ The first Christmas after Fanny’s death, Longfellow wrote, “How inexpressibly sad are all holidays.”
- ✓ A year after the incident, he wrote, “I can make no record of these days. Better leave them wrapped in silence. Perhaps someday God will give me peace.”
- ✓ Longfellow’s journal entry for December 25th 1862 reads: ““A merry Christmas’ say the children, but that is no more for me.”
- ✓ The Christmas of 1863 was silent in Longfellow’s journal.
- ✓ Finally, on Christmas Day of 1864, he wrote the words of the poem, “Christmas Bells.”
- ✓ We know that poem as “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”

Worship

- Choir = “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”
- Candle Lighting
- Congregation = “Silent Night”
- Congregation = “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Benediction

- "May you be filled with the obedience of Mary, the righteousness of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of Jesus. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever."