

Grace and peace are yours dear friends from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have been extended a blessing and a gift not only to serve as the shepherd of our congregation, but also to serve as an instructor at a college in our community. As such, I teach Ethics to students ranging in ages from 18 to 24. The book I use is titled, “Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics”, which suggests there is more to an ethical lifestyle than catchy taglines; Look Out For Number One; Survival of the Fittest, and When in Rome – Do as the Romans. These ‘so called’ bumper stickers are the means to identify the ethical theories of Egoism, Evolutionism, and Cultural Relativism.

The author uniquely introduces 11 ethical theories in their proximity to a divine creator, with the first theories allowing no room for a God in deciding Right and Wrong, and concluding with theories that move closer to a Divine influence in our lives. A final theory is centered completely on a good God that has indeed created all things good and has indeed defined for us that which is good and bad; right and wrong.

While I am not teaching you ethics today, there is an ethical theory that is appropriate to mention in the context of our gospel message. Narrative Ethics are an order of moral standards that define what is right and wrong through the story of other people’s lives; with the ultimate story of life being that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

However, before we approach the gospel text, I need to set up one more element to reveal the gospel narrative in a context you may not have considered. At council meeting on Monday night, Beverly shared devotions that reflected the story of a person named Kevin. The narrative begins as his bother is passing by his bedroom at evening and overhears his prayers to God. You see Kevin believes that God is ‘under his bed’ because Kevin was born with a disability that limited his mental capabilities and his learning development.

What Kevin does not lack is faith and trust. Kevin believes in telling the truth, keeping promises, and following the rules. Kevin finds the same excitement every weekend and anticipates the excitement of sharing a hotdog with his dad at the airport while they watch airplanes take off and land. For Kevin, life is as it should be. For Kevin’s family, Kevin is a special member of the family that requires their understanding, love, patience, and compassion; and Kevin (in return) blesses their lives with an abundance of wisdom in revealing what the world really looks like through the eyes of faith.

The gospel text today is a narrative, a story of Mary revealed to us through *her* eyes of faith. Within the womb of Mary is the full divinity of God’s Word taking human form. Holy Scripture tells us nothing about the background of Mary, no details of her life, education, appearance, skills, or any characteristic that would add to the story of her life. We only know that God found favor with her, she is righteous, and she is a mystery that we must accept with faith.

God chose Mary and she has faith, knowledge, and understanding of the events unfolding before her and she gives thanks in a manner that is recorded for all history and humankind to

forever reflect and ponder upon. [sung] *“My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my spirit rejoices in you. You have looked with love on your servant here and blessed me all my life through. Great and mighty are you, O Holy One, strong is your kindness evermore. How you favor the weak and lowly one, humbling the proud of heart. You have cast the mighty down from their thrones and lifted up humble of heart. You have filled the hungry with wondrous things and left the wealthy no part. Great and mighty are you O Faithful One., strong is your justice strong your love. As you promised to Sarah and Abraham kindness for evermore. My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my spirit rejoices in you. You have looked with love on your servant here and blessed me all my life through.”*

The song is the narrative of Mary’s praise, thanksgiving, and faith for her Lord who has blessed her abundantly. Her song of praise combines with the praises of all of heaven and earth to proclaim the greatness and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who’s narrative is the purest form of love for each of us.

God chose Mary because of her righteousness, her faith, for the gifts God had planned for her before her birth. Likewise, God chose Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Elijah who’s story of God with them reveals all that our good God has planned, designed, and prepared for us.

In our world today, in the ‘here and now’; God chooses Kevin with a faith so pure that he knows God is under his bed, who knows beyond the question of a doubt that promises are meant to be kept, and who is excited when life engages with life to share love, hope, peace and joy! Kevin’ narrative combines with the praises of all heaven and earth to proclaim the greatness and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who’s narrative is the purest form of love for each of us.

My dear friends in Christ, God chooses us too. God chose you and me for the task we have been gifted, blessed, and created unique for. All that we do, say, and contemplate is meant to glorify our good and gracious God in heaven who is come to live among us. Our faith is designed and given to reveal God’s love for us in a way that we too might believe (without doubt) that God is not only ‘under our bed’, but in our hearts, lives, words, and actions. Our faith is powerful enough to accept that God is not only ‘under the beds of our neighbors, friends, and even complete strangers’, He is also directing their hearts, lives, words, and actions.

Our faith is strong enough to provide a life that believes promises really are meant to be kept. A life where kindness matters, compassion is essential, and the anticipation and excitement of ‘life-sharing-life’ to engage in the love, hope, peace, joy, and very good news of what God has done for all of us through Jesus Christ our Lord is, *IS*, the narrative and song that combines with all heaven and earth to proclaim the greatness and mercy of our Almighty Heavenly Father.

Tomorrow we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh among us, the fulfillment of prophecy and the revelation of God’s love for humankind. May we all live within and experience our faith to where doubt is gone, belief is pure, and our genuine excitement and anticipation of ‘life-sharing-life’ to experience the love, hope, joy and peace that passes all understanding will forever keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!