

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY - 11/28/21

*PASTOR: FOR CENTURIES, VOICES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CALLED GOD'S PEOPLE TO LOOK FOR THE MESSIAH, YET MOST JEWISH PEOPLE MISSED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPHETS' WORDS. MICAH, FOR INSTANCE, SAID THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM.

IN PSALM 89:27, 36, DAVID FORETOLD OF A FIRSTBORN WHEN HE SPOKE OF THE LORD DECLARING THAT DAVID'S SEED WOULD ENDURE FOREVER. ISAIAH MADE THE PREPOSTEROUS CLAIM THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN A VIRGIN. HOSEA REVEALED THAT AT A CERTAIN TIME GOD WOULD CALL HIS SON OUT OF EGYPT. SUCH OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES AND PROMISES WERE SPOKEN FIVE HUNDRED TO SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST, AND DEVOUT JEWS WOULD WONDER ... WILL THE MESSIAH COME IN MY LIFETIME? WILL I SEE THE PROMISED ONE WITH MY OWN EYES?

IN A SENSE, WHEN WE OPEN GOD'S WORD TODAY, WE SEE WITH OUR OWN EYES AS WELL AS THE EYES OF OUR HEARTS, THAT ALL OF GOD'S PROMISES REGARDING THE ANOINTED ONE OF GOD ARE FULFILLED, DETAIL FOR DETAIL, IN THE LIFE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH. IN FACT, NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES TAKE US ON A JOURNEY, REVEALING THIS CARPENTER'S SON TO BE THE MESSIAH, A DESCENDENT OF ABRAHAM, AN HEIR TO THE THRONE OF DAVID, BORN OF A VIRGIN IN THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM.

THROUGHOUT JESUS' LIFE AND MINISTRY, OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES BECOME LIVING, BREATHING NEW TESTAMENT REALITIES. WHAT BETTER TIME THAN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON TO REFLECT ON THESE PROMISES OF SCRIPTURE - PROMISES FULFILLED - THAT POINT TO OUR ULTIMATE HOPE: GOD'S SON, JESUS CHRIST.

*CANDLELIGHTER #1: PROPHECY!

*CANDLELIGHTER #2: NOW THE LORD HAD SAID TO ABRAM - "GET OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY, FROM YOUR FAMILY, AND FROM YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE, TO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU. I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION; I WILL BLESS YOU AND MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT; AND YOU SHALL BE A BLESSING. I WILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU, AND I WILL CURSE HIM WHO CURSES YOU; AND IN YOU ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED".

SO ABRAM DEPARTED AS THE LORD HAD SPOKEN TO HIM, AND LOT WENT WITH HIM. AND ABRAM WAS SEVENTY FIVE YEARS OLD WHEN HE DEPARTED FROM HARAN. (GENESIS 12:1-4)

*PASTOR: WHAT AN AMAZING PROMISE! THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE CHOSE TO MAKE THIS EVERLASTING AND IRREVOCABLE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS. SPEAKING THESE WORDS RECORDED IN GENESIS, THE ALMIGHTY POINTED TO THE GREATEST BLESSING OF ALL, A BLESSING THAT WOULD BE FOR ALL THE EARTH: GOD WOULD GIVE HIS SON TO DIE FOR SINNERS LIKE US, THAT WE MIGHT KNOW FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE. THROUGH TWO THOUSAND YEARS AND FORTY TWO GENERATIONS, A NEW CHAPTER IN THE SOVEREIGN LORD'S PLAN FOR HUMANITY WAS BEGINNING TO UNFOLD - AND ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WOULD INDEED BE BLESSED!

*CANDLELIGHTER #2: FULFILLMENT!

*CANDLELIGHTER #1: THE BOOK OF GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF DAVID, THE SON OF ABRAHAM ... SO ALL THE GENERATIONS FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID ARE FOURTEEN GENERATIONS, FROM DAVID UNTIL THE CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON ARE FOURTEEN GENERATIONS, AND FROM THE CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON UNTIL THE CHRIST, ARE FOURTEEN GENERATIONS. (MATTHEW 1:1, 17)

*PASTOR: PROMISE MADE, PROMISE FULFILLED! WRITING TO A PRIMARILY JEWISH AUDIENCE, MATTHEW OUTLINED JESUS' ANCESTRY. THE GOSPEL WRITER WANTED HIS HEBREW AUDIENCE TO CLEARLY SEE THAT JESUS WAS INDEED THE LONG AWAITED KING OF ISRAEL, IN THE LINE OF DAVID, WHO WOULD SET GOD'S PEOPLE FREE FROM CAPTIVITY TO SIN AND ITS' CONSEQUENCES. YET MATTHEW DID SOMETHING UNUSUAL AS HE OUTLINED THE FAMILY TREE. HE NAMED FIVE WOMEN - TAMAR, A CANAANITE; RAHAB, A GENTILE; RUTH, A MOABITE; BATHSHEBA, KING DAVID'S WIFE; AND MARY, THE TEENAGE MOTHER OF JESUS.

WHY? BECAUSE THEIR STORIES, RECORDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD'S GRACE IS AVAILABLE TO ALL, REGARDLESS OF GENDER, RACE, OR PERSONAL HISTORY. IN FACT, EVEN TODAY GOD SEEMS TO DELIGHT IN WELCOMING INTO HIS FAMILY THOSE WE MIGHT NEVER EXPECT.

THIS SEASON, KEEP YOUR EYES AND HEART OPEN FOR UNEXPECTED WAYS THAT GOD WILL REVEAL TO YOU THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS.

*CANDLELIGHTER #1: PROMISE!

*CANDLELIGHTER #2: WHEN GOD MADE A PROMISE TO ABRAHAM, BECAUSE HE COULD SWEAR BY NO ONE GREATER, HE SWORE BY HIMSELF, SAYING - "SURELY BLESSING I WILL BLESS YOU, AND MULTIPLYING, I WILL MULTIPLY YOU"! AND SO, AFTER HE HAD PATIENTLY ENDURED, HE OBTAINED THE PROMISE. (HEBREWS 6:13-15)

*PASTOR: OUR GOD LOVES TO POUR OUT BLESSINGS! HE DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE HIM - WHO SHOW OUR LOVE BY OBEYING HIM - WHEN HE PROVIDES AND PROTECTS, WHEN HE GUIDES OUR STEPS AND GOES AHEAD OF US, WHEN HE WALKS WITH US THROUGH HARD TIMES AND BRINGS US TO GOOD AND PLEASANT PLACES. GOD BLESSES US WITH HIS CONSTANT PRESENCE. WHATEVER TRIALS WE FACE, NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM HIS LOVE. WHATEVER TWISTS IN THE ROAD, NOTHING CAN INTERFERE WITH HIS SOVEREIGN POWER AND GOODNESS. WHATEVER MISSTEPS WE TAKE, HE CAN REDEEM. WHATEVER HURTS WE EXPERIENCE, HE CAN HEAL! YES, OUR GOD LOVES TO POUR OUT BLESSINGS!

*CANDLELIGHTER #1: BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO WALKS NOT IN THE COUNSEL OF THE UNGODLY, NOR STANDS IN THE PATH OF SINNERS, NOR SITS IN THE SEAT OF THE SCORNFUL; BUT ONE'S DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND IN HIS LAW ONE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT. WE SHALL BE LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY THE RIVERS OF WATER, THAT BRINGS FORTH ITS' FRUIT IN ITS' SEASON, WHOSE LEAF ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER; AND WHATEVER WE DO SHALL PROSPER. (PSALM 1:1-3)

*CANDLELIGHTER #2: LIGHT 1ST ADVENT CANDLE