|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2 Samuel 7:1-11  Luke 1:26-38 | Moments make a Story | Pinelands – 9am – 22/12/2024  Thornton – 10:30am – 22/12/2024 |

It takes many **MOMENTS to make up a STORY.**

**Story Number 1…**

Boy meets Girl,

Boy and Girl share a special experience

Girl and Boy connect over many moments

Girl and Boy fall in Love

Girl and Boy get married

Boy and Girl live happily ever after

Many moments make up this Love story

**Story Number 2…**

Lady helps an unwanted baby girl

Lady houses and protects this young Girl

Girl begins to trust the Lady

Lady helps care for the Girl

Lady helps educate the young Girl

Girl makes it to university.

Many moments make up this Love story

Today is the **Fourth Sunday in Advent…**

This week we reflect on the **MOMENT** that Godʼs loving promise,

spoken through the centuries, through the prophets,

and, finally, through John the Baptist…

The Moment of **INCARNATION**

If there is anything that adequately reflects ***what LOVE means…***

from a divine perspective, it is the **INCARNATION.**

**ONE MOMENT in a MUCH bigger Story…**

Filled with many other ***Significant and Impactful* MOMENTS**

Author ***Philip Yancey*** tells a story…

of his good friend ***Dr Paul Brand’s*** mother.

Paul Brand’s parents were missionaries to the people of India.

And they fondly called his mother, ***“Granny Brand”.***

On returning to his childhood home in India, **Paul Brand** met a number of people who had been loved and cared for by “Granny Brand”.

One woman tells this story…

***“The hill tribes didn't practise abortion. They disposed of***

***unwanted children by leaving them beside the road.***

***Granny Brand would take in these children, nurse them back***

***to health, rear them, and try to educate them.***

***I was one of the unwanted ones, left to die.***

***There were several dozen of us, but she treated it more like an***

***adoption centre than an orphanage.***

***We called her Mother of the Hills.***

***When I did well in studies, she paid for me to go off to a proper***

***school, and eventually I earned a Master's degree. I now teach***

***nursing at the University of Madras and I came several hundred***

***miles today to honour the Brands for what they did for me and***

***many others.”***

**Many MOMENTS make up that Love Story.**

**Which MOMENT** was the ***most significant*** / had most ***Impact?***

Being picked up at the side of the road.?

Being nursed back to health?

Being sent off to Proper School?

Graduating from University?

***ALL* are Significant / Impactful Moments in the whole Story.**

**Many MOMENTS make up that Story.**

Let me share with you **ONLY TWO THOUGHTS…**

Reflected through some Significant and Impactful Moments

In the ADVENT LOVE story *(there are many more)*

**1) First THOUGHT… *GOD’s WILD RADICAL LOVE***

There is ***no way*** to **TAME GOD’S LOVE…**

***We CANNOT…*** Adequately describe it in WORDS

Illustrate it with just one picture

Reduce it to a single Moment or Event

‘Domesticate’ God’s Love

***It is ALWAYS…*** Bigger than we can imagine

Beyond our understanding

Deeper than our Experience

**IT IS A… *WILD RADICAL LOVE***

In the **MOMENT** ***David wants to build a House for God…***

To which God responds that he has never needed a house

**God’s Love cannot be confined to a house**

***We think…*** God is only in Church

Only Church is Sacred Ground

***BUT…***  God is everywhere…

In your home, at the shops,

Doing Parkrun, in the Pub

God has Created Everything…

Therefore everywhere…

**Is sacred Ground**

***GOD’S WILD RADICAL LOVE is…***

bigger, more ornate, more beautiful…

than any ***Palace, Cathedral, Church or Chapel***

***In the* MOMENT** when **MARY** is told… *(by the Angel)*

she, the favoured one, would give birth to the Messiah

With all her questions and confusion and excuses…

HOW can this be?

In this **MOMENT of Announcement of…** **INCARNATION…**

**OF Love** being born in ***Human Flesh…***

The WORLD is Forever Different

**IN THIS** **MOMENT of the Advent Story…**

we see ***GOD’s WILD RADICAL LOVE***

There are other **MOMENTS…**

Joseph’s Response ***and*** Journey to Bethlehem

Guiding Star ***and*** Visitors from afar

***GOD’S WILD RADICAL LOVE…*** **On FULL DISPLAY**

***GOD’S WILD RADICAL LOVE…***

**Cannot be…** Manipulated to get what we want

Changed to suite our needs

Controlled to only be given to certain people

At certain times

Contained by any one person or structure.

Limited to our Earthly Understanding.

***GOD’S LOVE IS WILD RADICAL LOVE…*** Touches each of us…

***Every time*** ***GOD*** breaks through into our…

WORLD and LIVES…

IS a moment of ***WILD RADICAL LOVE***

THOUGHTS and ACTIVITIES…

IS a moment of ***WILD RADICAL LOVE***

WORSHIP and FESTIVITIES…

IS a moment of ***WILD RADICAL LOVE***

**2) Second THOUGHT… *GOD GAMBLES ON LOVE***

**Mary’s Experience** is certainly unique… even weird in some respects

***BUT…*** we are lured into a trap of thinking that

**Mary** is different from us…

I mean… She was Chosen

She was more Special

than others

It was the Eternal plan

We think Mary is different from us…

**BUT is She?**

**MARY** was an ordinary young woman…

**No** special *education or qualification…*

That made her Exceptionally Different.

**No** particular *gifts or talents* that we are aware of…

That made her Exceptionally Different.

***BUT…*** **She is asked to… Share in a World Changing Reality.**

**Was MARY…** any different from every one of us…? *(men included)*

We, Like **MARY**, are ordinary men and women…

***All Different…*** Yes…

***BUT…*** all present in this moment

None of us have Super Natural Human powers…

Neither did she.

***YET…*** **We, Like MARY…**

Are asked to share in the same…

***world-changing Reality of Incarnation.***

Are asked to be part of **God’s Eternal Plan…**

***In this MOMENT***

**Mary…** With all her Questions, Confusion and Lack of Understanding…

***Responds*** and ***ACCEPTS* her call.**

**Makes a huge step** of Faith and Hope…

Simply because she **TRUSTS GOD’s LOVE**

**GOD GAMBLES on MARY’s LOVE in HIM and TRUST of HIM.**

**Luke** is not just telling **Mary’s Story** in this **MOMENT…**

He is also ***INVITING us,*** you and me,***Into this* MOMENT…**

to make… the same ***STEP*** of ***Faith…***

on ***LOVE*** and ***TRUST***

We like **Mary, and David**, can **CHOOSE to accept or ignore**

***THIS INVITATION.***

***SURE…*** We have lots of Questions

We also get Confused by what is asked of us

We always have EXCUSES about everything

**GOD’s GAMBLING on our LOVE of HIM…**

**AND OUR TRUST *in* HIM.**

***GOD’s WILD RADICAL LOVE* is PRESENT in this MOMENT**

***CAN WE,*** Like Mary and David…

**MAKE THE CHOICE… and SAY YES!!**

***YES to…*** Sharing in this ***INCARNATION MOMENT***

Sharing in a ***World Changing Reality***

Sharing in ***God’s Eternal Plan***

**JESUS comes to…**  **Live** within us

**Live** Through us

***GOD’s WILD RADICAL LOVE…*** **Chooses you and me**

***WHY?*** That is who our God is.

***GOD IS GAMBLING on YOUR LOVE FOR HIM…***

**MAKE THE CHOICE, *Say YES!!***

**VIDEO – “Moments”**

**“GOD… I Wonder what you could do with me?”**

**IN THIS *MOMENT…***

**Let God be** **BORN** in you again

**In this ongoing** **ADVENT LOVE STORY.**

**2 Samuel 7:1-11 Nathan's Message to David**

King David was settled in his palace, and the Lord kept him safe from all his enemies. Then the king said to the prophet Nathan, “Here I am living in a house built of cedar, but God's Covenant Box is kept in a tent!”

Nathan answered, “Do whatever you have in mind, because the Lord is with you.” But that night the Lord said to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David that I say to him, ‘You are not the one to build a temple for me to live in. From the time I rescued the people of Israel from Egypt until now, I have never lived in a temple; I have travelled around living in a tent. In all my traveling with the people of Israel I never asked any of the leaders that I appointed why they had not built me a temple made of cedar.’

“So tell my servant David that I, the Lord Almighty, say to him, ‘I took you from looking after sheep in the fields and made you the ruler of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have defeated all your enemies as you advanced. I will make you as famous as the greatest leaders in the world. I have chosen a place for my people Israel and have settled them there, where they will live without being oppressed any more. Ever since they entered this land, they have been attacked by violent people, but this will not happen again. I promise to keep you safe from all your enemies and to give you descendants.

**Luke 1:26-38 The Birth of Jesus Is Announced**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, “Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!”

Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, “Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!”

Mary said to the angel, “I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do.”

“I am the Lord's servant,” said Mary; “may it happen to me as you have said.” And the angel left her.