

Lent Midweek 4 The Annunciation - March 26, 2025
Text: Isaiah 7:10-14
Theme: A Sign from God

False piety has always been a cover for disbelief. By false piety, I mean someone who is pretending not to want to bother the Lord or involve the Lord because He's too great for their small needs. Ahaz is a case in point. God instructed him to ask for a sign and Ahaz refused. He modestly said that he would not put the Lord to the test but the real issue is that he did not believe that God would do what He said He would do. Ahaz had all kinds of political problems and he was looking to all the wrong places for help. Instead of seeking alliances with the enemies, God encourages him to seek help from Him. Then God gives Ahaz a sign anyway.

It was not sign for which Ahaz was looking and probably not one that he even understood.

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." It was actually two signs in one. The greater sign, we know to be the Annunciation which we celebrate today. The angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she was going to have a son and He would be the Messiah for whom God's people had longed. The lesser sign to Ahaz was that God was going to resolve his political predicament in short order, in the time of a pregnancy to

be precise. Ahaz is making alliances with Assyria to combat Israel when God is about to use Assyria to wipe out Israel.

Ahaz reminds us of what Jesus said about having ears but not hearing. He does not believe that God can help him in his crisis so he refuses to pursue it. I pray on a regular basis that God would give me the powerful faith of Mary and not the puny faith of Ahaz. Mary answered correctly,

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” That is true piety. Mary did not understand what was happening to her. She was just a teenager! A virgin birth was unheard of, except in Isaiah’s prophecy to Ahaz, and Mary would never have imagined that she was the one about whom Isaiah was speaking. But nevertheless, she was ready to serve the Lord in any way He called her to serve, and to depend upon the Lord for everything she needed to accomplish her calling.

That is the way we want to be in life. We will always be tempted to be like Ahaz but we pray that God will make us like Mary. Whatever He calls us to do, we want to respond that we are the servants of the Lord and that whatever we do, it would be according to His Word. This is especially true during Lent when we take the time to think about our sin, the times we have been far more like

Ahaz. I cannot count the number of times that I have sprung head-long into my own plan without bothering to consult the Lord. It is too often that half way through I realize that I have not bothered to ask God for His direction. That seems to be one of my most consistent failures.

It is so tempting to live as though we were independent beings doing whatever we want. But we are not. We are sewn into a quilt called the Christian Church, which is the family of God. We are all connected by the body and blood of Jesus Christ himself. We are one body. Nothing I do or say only affects me and everything I do or say is supposed to be in service to God. When we give up our independence, trying to fix everything on our own like Ahaz, and bow to the cross like Mary, there we find peace and contentment.

Not only do we find peace and contentment, but we find success! As I lookback on my life, the things that have turned out best are the ones in which I had the least control. The times I either remembered to look to God or when I was thrown into such chaos that I had no choice but to depend on God were the times that things worked out the best. But it is so very difficult to take a deep breath, bow your head, fold your hands, and turn everything over to God.

It is hard because we know that His path is never the easy path. God never does anything the easy way instead of the right way. His path is always going to test and strengthen our faith. Still, His way is always going to be filled with blessings that we would never have known if we had stayed on our own path. Pray that God would give you the faith of Mary. It is the hard path, but it is also the path that is right next to Jesus, and it is full of blessings.