

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you O God, my strength and my joy... Amen.

In 1818, there was a little church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf Austria. A few days before Christmas, the parish musician informed the pastor that the organ was not working and it would not be fixed in time for Christmas Eve.

The musician was Franz Gruber and the Priest was a young man named Joseph Mohr. Franz offered to play his guitar for the Christmas Eve service and Priest Joseph agreed.

And then, the Priest asked Franz to write a melody to a poem he had written, so that it could be sung along with Franz and his guitar that Christmas Eve night...

That song, heard for the first time, so many years ago, in German, was Silent Night...

What a beautiful story, a story that begins with a terrible inconvenience, a broken organ...

Showing us that God appears even in the midst of disruptions, in the places that were not planned, and in the day-to-day messiness of life.

Which of course is similar to our gospel reading from today, and the well-known Christmas story of Jesus' birth.

This passage illustrates how God shows up in the midst of disruptions, inconveniences, and in ordinary life...

Mary and Joseph were inconvenienced during this time, as they needed to go on a long journey to a city that had no room for them, all while Mary was pregnant.

And when they finally arrived, Jesus was literally birthed during one of the most common things that people have been experiencing for centuries... The paying of taxes...

Then we have the shepherds... the people who were just going about their work, living out their livelihood, when they are disrupted and terrified by triumphant angels.

All of these examples... A broken musical instrument, taxes, forced-relocation, houselessness, work, and being scared... are things that every single person can relate to.

And these are also the things that most people wouldn't associate with God...

As most people associate God with things that are beautiful, filled with wonder, majesty, and awe...

And yet, God chooses to unveil Godself to the world in ways that are fragile like a baby, ordinary like taxes, and disruptive like the angels...

Showing that, in the midst of chaos and messiness of life... God is continuously seeking you out, and unveiling Godself to you...

God is in places that you might not normally think of... Because God is in all places...

And though God might use disruptions to unveil God's presence to you, like God did with the Shepherds that first Christmas night...

God's message, is always one of peace and love... Love like the love of Christ that is constantly being birthed in your midst...

Because even when things do not go as you have planned... Even when things seem to be hopeless... Christ's love is being birthed in your midst...

After all the very first Christmas was all about things unexpected, in places that were unsought, and not planned.

And if God can arrive there then... birthing God's love into all of creation, pronouncing peace on earth to all, and showering down abundant joy...

Just imagine what God can do now...

For life has completely changed from that unplanned first Christmas so many years ago.

As that was the night when God our Creator, became Christ the Created...
And lived among us...

Changing the course of history, proclaiming peace to all the earth... And reconciling all creation into the very being of Christ himself.

Because that night started Christ's journey... A journey that allowed Christ to experience what it really means to be human.

To breathe, to live, to experience disruptions, to experience things unplanned, bad weather and winter storms...

So that Christ could experience real life, and share with us the good news that comes in places unexpected...

Revealing that good news comes to people who are not perfect, nor who appear perfect, nor those who seem to have it all together...

As the good news is available for all who are willing to listen...

Because even the Shepherds, who were just doing their job, who feared and trembled, found the courage to listen and to bear witness to what the angels had to say.

Which means that when you find yourself scared, overwhelmed, or frustrated... Or when life seems to hand you curve balls, or crazy cold winter storms...

Somewhere, somehow, the love of Christ is always being birthed in your midst...

Because God is with us.

And yet it is easy to forget this, because we often get entangled into the business of life, the holidays, and all the things we have to do and want to do...

In fact, it is so easy to get caught up in this rhythm... That you can easily walk right past... A beautiful moment of Christ's love being birthed in your midst, and not even notice it.

But that is why we celebrate Christmas, as a reminder of this Holy Night...

The night when Christ, through God's love, was literally birthed in our midst.

A night that all creation bared witness to... the mystery of God's incarnation.

A sacred mystery that continues to bring families and friends together year after year...

A sacred mystery that continues to spread love, and joy... Through a story that unveils that God can appear when you least expect it...

So, this Christmas as you embrace whatever your tradition might be, or as you try something different and new...

Remember that God is always in your midst and that God is seeking you out.

For Christ was born, for you...

On a Silent Night, and Holy Night...

A night, that maybe wasn't quite as cold as this one...

But a night that changed the very trajectory of the cosmos.

Where Joseph and Mary held God's love...

Showing all of creation... that to hold God's love doesn't require one to do anything fancy... You just need to be willing to receive it.

Because this night was all about unexpected love... A night that continues on, inviting us to share God's love with loved ones, with neighbors, and with each other... Amen.