

CHURCH OF TE HEPARA PAI

Sunday 21 December 2014

Te Rātapu Tuawhā o te Haerenga Mai / 4th Sunday of Advent

GOD NEAR AT HAND



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SENTENCE OF THE DAY:



Soon we shall celebrate the birth of Jesus. We worship God with joy in our hearts as we are reminded of the words the angel said on that first Christmas Day: "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people."

Nga Mihi o Te Kirihimete Ki A Koe Me Te Whanau
COLLECT OF THE DAY – Let us pray:

O Holy One, as Christmas draws near there is a sense of excitement in the air. We can feel a joy in our lives and see it in those around us. Still, for some of us this is a sad time because of unhappy things that have happened in our lives. Help us to have the joy that does not depend on earthly happiness but on you. Help us to be filled with your joy so that we may share it with a joyless world. **Amen.**



God Near At Hand

What is the true meaning of Christmas? The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus who lived in Israel some 2,000 years ago, and who died on the cross for our sins. More particularly, we are talking about the *purpose* of his birth that Christmas is supposed to celebrate. His purpose was to enter into the world and become one of us, that he might deliver us from our sins. Jesus is not just any tāne. He is God in human form. By being born of the virgin Mary, he was made under the law and subject to the same temptations and limitations that we are, but he did not sin. Christmas is the celebration of the historical event of where God entered into our world so that he might show the perfection and holiness of God, and that through his work of living perfectly and dying on the cross for our sins and then rising again from the dead all who trust in him would be saved from the righteous judgment of God.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, before they came together, that is, while Mary was still a virgin, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35). Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary by the miraculous action of God without a human father. God's power, through the Holy Spirit, made it possible for Mary to have the son. The child, though without a human father, was fully human with a physical body like ours. This he received from Mary. At the same time, Jesus was fully God, with an eternal (Rom. 16:26), sinless nature. This he received from the Holy Spirit of God. Because Jesus was fully God, when we recall during the advent season Jesus' coming birth while he was still in Mary's womb (*refer to pictures on front page*), the kaupapa is **God Near at Hand** in the sense of Jesus being God about to be born into the world in human form.

Jesus' father is God and he is the Son of God. But Jesus is not God's Son in the sense of a human father and a son. God did not mate with Mary and, together with her, produce a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that he is God appearing in visible form as a human being. As the Son of God he is God, but he fulfils a different role to God the Father.

Jesus Christ was, by human birth, a descendant of King David. God made a promise to King David. He said to King David "***Your royal house and your kingdom will last forever in my sight. Your throne will last forever***" (2 Sam. 7:16). By the '***throne***,' God meant the royal authority to rule as king. God gave to Jesus the throne that he had promised to a descendant of King David. Jesus will rule over Israel for all time. He will also rule over everybody and everything in heaven and on the earth. His kingdom will never end. This will take place when he returns to this world soon, at which time God will establish his rule.

More than 2,000 years ago, a baby was born to a virgin. Because that baby was the sinless Son of God, yet fully human, his death and rising again from the dead made a way for us to re-establish friendly relations with God the Father and in so doing gain eternal life. This is the true meaning of Christmas.

In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit - amen.




The Old Testament Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16



A reading from 2 Samuel chapter 7 beginning at verse 1.

God's Promise to David



¹ The king moved into his palace. The LORD had given him peace and rest from all his enemies around him. ² Then the king spoke to Nathan the prophet. He said, "Here I am, living in a house that has beautiful cedar walls. But the ark of God remains in a tent."

³ Nathan replied to the king, "Go ahead and do what you want to. The LORD is with you."

⁴ But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan. The LORD said, ⁵ "Go and speak to my servant David. Tell him, 'The LORD says, "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶ I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt. But I have not lived in a house from then until now. I have been moving from place to place. I have been living in a tent. ⁷ I have moved from place to place with all the Israelites. I commanded their rulers to be shepherds over them. I never asked any of those rulers, 'Why haven't you built me a house that has beautiful cedar walls?' " "

⁸ "So tell my servant David, 'The LORD who rules over all says, "I took you away from the grasslands. That's where you were taking care of your father's sheep and goats. I made you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you everywhere you have gone. I have destroyed all your enemies. Now I will make you famous. Your name will be just as respected as the names of the most important people on earth. ¹⁰ I will provide a place where my people Israel can live. I will plant them in the land. Then they will have a home of their own. They will not be bothered anymore. Evil people will no longer crush them, as they did at first. ¹¹ That is what your enemies have done ever since I appointed leaders over my people Israel. But I will give you peace and rest from all of them.

" " "I tell you that I, the LORD, will set up a royal house for you.

¹⁶ **Your royal house and your kingdom will last forever in my sight. Your throne will last forever.** " " "

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Thanks be to God.



The Epistle Reading: Romans 16:25-27



A reading from Romans chapter 16 beginning at verse 25.

²⁵ May God receive glory. He is able to strengthen your faith. He does this in keeping with the good news and the message I preach. It is the message about Jesus Christ. This message is in keeping with the mystery hidden for a very long time. ²⁶ The mystery has now been made known through the writings of the prophets. **The eternal God** commanded that it be made known. God wanted all the Gentiles to obey him by trusting in him. ²⁷ May the only wise God receive glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38



The Holy Gospel according to Luke chapter 1 beginning at verse 26. Praise and Glory to God.



The Coming Birth of Jesus

²⁶ In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. ²⁷ He was sent to a virgin. The girl was engaged to a man named Joseph. He came from the family line of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel greeted her and said, "The Lord has blessed you in a special way. He is with you."

²⁹ Mary was very upset because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. ³¹ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. ³³ The Son of the Most High God will rule forever over his people. They are from the family line of Jacob. That kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How can this happen?" Mary asked the angel. "I am a virgin."

³⁵ **The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God.** ³⁶ Your relative Elizabeth will have a child even though she is old. People thought she could not have children. But she has been pregnant for six months now. ³⁷ That's because what God says will always come true."

³⁸ "I serve the Lord," Mary answered. "May it happen to me just as you said it would." Then the angel left her.

This is the Gospel of Christ. Praise to Christ, the Word.



Join Us For :

Advent 2014

The Christmas experience

Sundays at 10:15am;

Christmas eve at 11:00pm; Christmas day at 9:00am

KURA RAUMATI: TUES., 13 JAN. TO SUN., 18 JAN., 2015.

HUI AMORANGI AGM 2015: FRI., 13 MAR. - SUN., 15 MAR., 2015.

