

Christmas Eve
Sermon Text: Psalm 96
Luke 2:1-20
December 24, 2013

It is time. The things in life that we frequently look forward to the most tend to have a lengthy buildup. The anxiousness has risen.

There is no more time for preparation. For those getting married, the time of preparation and the multiple tasks that need accomplished may seem like it takes forever. The invitations are sent. The flowers have been ordered. The caterer has the food prepared. The hour for the wedding has come. You go from single woman or man to one who is forever changed.

That same couple may be blessed with news that they are expecting a child. Likewise there is preparation. Some have gone to Lamaze classes. There are the baby showers. The baby's room is made ready. For all the preparations, the time comes whether one is ready or not.

The time came for Mary to give birth to her child. The Greek word can also mean to fill up or to be fulfilled. That is a key word when it comes to Jesus.

It was the Holy Spirit that filled Mary with this child. The Spirit filled both Mary and Joseph with faith to trust in God that His will was being accomplished or fulfilled through them.

It is time for what has been spoken by the prophets to be fulfilled. It is time for Isaiah's declaration to be accomplished. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The Holy Spirit is present, guiding wise men to search for the Christ child. Angels declare the good news to ordinary Shepherds, men whose names we don't even know. The Holy Spirit leads them to the Holy infant born of a virgin. The Holy Spirit will lead Mary, Joseph and Jesus from Bethlehem, to Egypt to Nazareth.

The purpose for all this is clear. Jesus has come to save us from the death incurred by our sinful nature. Jesus has come to fulfill not only what was spoken of him about his birth, but also about his death.

On what we call Maundy Thursday, it was time to fulfill his purpose. He started by sharing with the

disciples the Holy Communion. There he takes bread, gives thanks and gives it to not only those disciples but for all who will believe. This is my body given for you! This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins and mine!

On the cross Jesus after everything was accomplished, after all was fulfilled declared “It is finished.” He did what he had come to do. He died for us and for our salvation.

And yet, the new life was just beginning. On that first day of the week the most significant event the world has seen culminated in Jesus rising from the dead.

We are the recipients of this amazing grace. We are the ones who receive the blessings of the Christ. The time has come.

The time came for you when led by the Holy Spirit you or your parents brought you to the water of baptism. You have been filled with the Holy Spirit, sealed and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

The time has come for us to realize the wondrous gift we have been given. We belong to Christ. We have been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and with

that power we believe even when the world tells us we are fools for believing. When cynics, skeptics, those of other religions apart from Christianity or the atheist dispute what God has done, we stand firm in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that gives faith and in that faith equips us to share it.

The time has come for us to share this good news, following the example of the Shepherds who went from the manger “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” The time has come for us to share that Christ is not dead. He has risen.

The time has come for us, filled with the Holy Spirit, to share the good news with the sick, who long to be made well. The time has come for us to comfort the grieving with the truth of the resurrection and new life, while at the same time being with them in their loneliness with your prayerful presence.

The time has come for us, filled with the Holy Spirit to use our time, our talents, and all that we have to the glory of God in service to our neighbors near and far. We may do that through a mission trip. We may do that through other organizations following the example of people who deliver meals for the Pleasant Unity Meal’s on Wheels.

In your bulletin we are inviting you to purchase a Bible that can be used either here for worship or be given to someone who does not own one or who may have lost theirs in some type of disaster.

The Holy Spirit is alive in you. Christ is born. Emmanuel, God is with us. Go, tell this good news knowing that it is for you and for the world. AMEN.