



"The Adoration of the Child", by Correggio (ca. 1490-1534), painted 1518-20, now at Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. © Web Gallery of Art. The painting, which is sometimes called "Our Lady Worshipping the Child", portrays the one time in human history when a mother's worship of her child was right and proper—yes, even required. This Sunday, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, remembers the children of Bethlehem, from two years old and under, who were massacred by order of Herod the Great in a vain attempt to destroy the infant Jesus. The feast day is commemorated on December 28 in the West and on December 29 in the East.

### Advent Reminds Us that the Word "Impossible" Is Not in God's Dictionary

"In our lesson today, the angel visits Mary, a young teenage girl who lives in Nazareth," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said Sunday, "a tiny village in Galilee that had a reputation for being the kind of place that only a public relations genius could convince you to spend any time there."

The angel tells Mary that "by the power of the Holy Spirit Mary will literally smuggle God into the world through her own body," Pastor Thelander continued. Lest Mary doubt God's promise, the angel told her to "look at your relative Elizabeth, the barren woman who cannot have children. She's already six months along."

"And at that moment, a young teenage girl is faced with an enormous challenge, a

challenge that has come disguised as an opportunity. The challenge that lies before her is the willingness to believe that the word 'impossible' is not in God's vocabulary."

"(W)hen we look within, and we see the dark places of our hearts, when we see the brokenness that still lies within us and within our families, and when we confront the hopelessness that infects our world, we are left dumbfounded and speechless. . . . What possible hope can there be for me? For us? . . ."

"I want to tell you something this morning, something that is worth squaring back your shoulders and sitting on the edge of your seat to hear. The God who sought out a teenage girl in a backwoods village in Galilee, and who recruited her into the largest (p. 2 →)

### Why Did God Choose Bethlehem for the Birth of Jesus?

"Of all the cities, towns and villages in Palestine, why did God choose such an unheard-of hamlet as Bethlehem for the birth of Christ?" Pastor Thelander asked rhetorically in his Christmas Eve sermon.

"In Mary's song of joy, the *Magnificat*, Mary praises God because 'he has filled the hungry with good things.' Jesus told a crowd near the Sea of Galilee, 'I am the bread of life.'"

"Bethlehem" means "house of bread," Pastor Thelander said. "This all began in a stable, but for us tonight, it ends here at a table—a table where the bread of life waits to feed us. . . . to satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts."



Epworthies caroled in the parish Monday evening, with outstanding response and appreciation.

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Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Sunday, Jan. 4, 6 p.m.: Evensong, then Epiphany party

**For the poor:** Fresh potatoes, paper plates, plastic silverware and napkin sets, turkeys, hams, canned yams, sweet potatoes, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce, ready-to-serve rolls, butter or margarine in 1-lb. tubs, stuffing mix, disposable salt/pepper shakers, frozen pies, onions, cake/dessert mixes, tamale-making ingredients: pork cushion meat, masa corn meal.

**Readings, 12/28:** Jer. 31:15-17; Ps. 124; Rev. 21:1-7; Mt. 2:13-18. **1/4, 10 a.m.:** Is. 60:1-9; Ps. 72:1-17; Eph. 3:1-12; Mt. 2:1-12. **1/4, 6 p.m.:** Is. 52:7-10; Ps. 100; Rev. 21:22-27.

**Prayer Emphases:** United Arab Emirates; American Baptist Churches; First Presbyterian Church, Providence, RI, and the Revs. Dave Watermulder and Chris Foster; New Start Ministries; parishioners on El Rancho Drive.

**(12/21 Sermon, cont'd.)** smuggling operation in human history, knows where you live as well. He will find you. He will visit you. You can count on it. . . . If someone off the street were to ask me now about Advent, what it means and why it's important, my answer to them would be this: Advent is a reminder to us that the word 'impossible' cannot be found in God's dictionary." Gabriel cited Elizabeth to Mary. "What I can point you to is the ordinary stuff of bread and wine. . . . They are God's messenger (that) nothing is impossible with God."