

WGUMC December 16, 2012 Celebration
Luke 1:39-45

We've been talking about meeting Jesus this Christmas. First, I said that if you want to meet Jesus you have to live in EXPECTATION. But then I said that when Jesus comes, even if you're expecting it, it's going to feel like an INTERRUPTION. But even if you only get a glimpse of him, even if it's only a fleeting meeting, you better respond with CELEBRATION. Whatever you do when Jesus comes to you, don't wait to celebrate!

Take it from me. I'm the one who can take an ability to delay gratification to unhealthy extremes. I've always had a way of putting off the party because I'm still waiting, waiting for term to be over, the work to be done, the goal to be reached, the victory to be won, always waiting for conditions to be just right, waiting for perfection to come. Hank and I were too broke and too busy to take a break when we got married. Seventeen years later, we're still waiting for the honeymoon!

One of my favorite theologians, Theodore Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss, has a word of warning for people like me, who

...can get so confused
that [we'll] start in to race
down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace
and grind on for miles across weirdish wild space,
headed, [he fears], toward a most useless place.
The Waiting Place...

...for people just waiting.
Waiting for a train to go
or a bus to come, or a plane to go
or the mail to come, or the rain to go
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow
or waiting around for a Yes or No
or waiting for their hair to grow.
Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite
or waiting for wind to fly a kite
or waiting around for Friday night
or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake
or a pot to boil, or a Better Break
or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants
or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.
Everyone is just waiting.

[Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*]

Waiting, when they could be celebrating. John the Baptist wasn't even born yet, and he was celebrating. He didn't just sit there in the womb like it was some kind of tomb. When his mother, Elizabeth, greeted her cousin, Mary, and baby John heard the voice of the mother of God, he jumped for joy. That's what the story says: "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb."

You see, John didn't wait until Jesus was born, until the Messiah grew up, until he began his ministry, until he started changing history, until he came into his glory. No! John celebrated Jesus when the hopes and dreams of the whole world were still in utero.

Baby John and Baby Jesus. Call it a "fetal attraction"! Now, you might say that John meeting Jesus when they were both in the womb is hardly a meeting at all. But aren't most of our encounters with Christ like that? Aren't most of us still babes in the faith? After all, we don't really understand who this

Jesus is or why he comes. We can't see him. We don't know what to say to him. We're not sure how to follow him. When it comes to living a Christian life, aren't we in many ways still in the womb? But when Jesus comes, there's only one thing we have to do. And there's one thing babes of all ages can do. When we open that door and hear that voice, the only thing to do is rejoice.

Now, you might want to dance. I might go for a run. You might post it on Facebook. I might write a sermon. There are many, many ways it can be done, because in the end, rejoicing is simply the soul's way of receiving the Divine One. It's our own way of saying "yes" to life and "I want to be with you" to Christ.

If you want to know, joy is what meeting Jesus feels like, even if that meeting is very tenuous and fleeting. If you've ever for a moment felt true joy—not happiness, not pleasure, but pure, unselfish, uncontainable, incontestable, indescribable

joy—then you've met Jesus. But whatever you do, don't think you have to wait for some fuller revelation to have your celebration. When it comes to meeting Jesus, you don't have to know everything you're supposed to know. You don't have to be everything you're supposed to be. Paul says that we know only in part, and we see in a mirror dimly. [I Cor 13:9,12] So we see Jesus only intermittently. But that doesn't mean we can't see him at all. So, rejoice in the Christ you know. Celebrate the little bit of God you see. Share any scrap of Good News that you hear, no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what time of year.

I truly believe the words of Madeleine L'Engle's poem [*First Coming*]. I believe that God won't wait until our world is ready, until the nations are at peace. I believe that God comes when our hearts are unsteady and especially when little children are crying out for release [re: school shooting in Connecticut this week]. So whenever Jesus comes into your life, however

he comes into your Christmas, celebrate that. Nothing else you can get or give this year can beat that. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice." [Phil 4:4]

First Coming by Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!