

# You Are a Blessing

## First Sunday in Advent

Luke 1:26-38    Isaiah 43:1-7  
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

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**When you were a child, did you receive the message that you were a blessing?** If you were raised in a faith tradition, did your faith teach you this message? If so, how did that shape your self-image and perceptions of others? If not, what messages did you internalize and receive? How did those messages shape you? Today's theme, "You are a blessing", is a message we may find easy to say to babies and children, but it may feel radical or difficult to say to adults. Why?

We are being asked to reflect upon these important questions from this year's Advent resource material from A Sanctified Art. As you can see on the cover of the worship bulletin, the overall theme for Advent this year is "Words for the Beginning: Advent Reminders for New Seasons." We will explore how Advent is "a season of endings and beginnings. For instance, as the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Jesus' birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins on in disturbing ways.

The resource material states, "**We invite you to enter this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.** As you journey through this season, may you find words for belovedness and hope. May you find words for beginning again. [Don't we all have areas in our lives where we wish to begin again?] For no matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, **love is your beginning.**"

With that as an overview, let's take a look at the scripture passages that have been chosen for this particular day. "We begin with being a blessing, our blessedness, for this is Mary's beginning, and it is ours as well. This, by itself, is a radical statement. Why? Because **far too many people, perhaps yourself, have been told – implicitly and explicitly – that they are a burden instead of a blessing.** There are many things in our own culture and society that might make us believe we are not a blessing. **If we ever stop believing that we are a blessing to God, then we may stop believing this about others. Conversely, when we're rooted in our blessedness, we can treat every created being as a blessing as well.**"

In her resource commentary on these scripture passages, Kayla Craig writes, "**The Advent journey unfolds like a well-worn quilt, each patchwork piece lovingly threaded across time and space.** In each thread, we find blessed assurance that with every sacred stitch, God has been moving toward us all along. This season reminds us that, what some may see as discarded scraps, the Maker of heaven and earth calls beautiful and blessed. **Mary, an ordinary girl from the obscure corners of Nazareth, was not cloaked in power or prestige—but was blanketed in belovedness. And that was enough.**

"Advent invites us to reflect on how we, like Mary, are invited into God's redemptive narrative—no matter how ordinary or small we might feel—for **each of us has the potential to carry God's love into a weary world. [You are enough!]**

**“In Luke 1:26-38, the story of Mary and the angel, Gabriel illustrates how God selects someone the world might overlook to be part of something beautiful.** Gabriel's message, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you,” isn't merely a formality but a declaration of Mary's essential place in this divine quilt. Mary's encounter with Gabriel, a pivotal moment in the Advent story, marks the unveiling of a promise and a prophecy of a miraculous birth that subverted every expectation of what a coming King's arrival might look like. Mary's response—“How will this be?”—is profoundly human. In this moment of divine mystery, Gabriel offers a blessed reassurance: “Do not be afraid.” When we wonder if our quiet worries or loud wonderings matter in the vast expanse of the cosmos, these words remind us that God knows our wandering hearts, acknowledges our fears, and moves toward us.

**“Isaiah 43** echoes this comfort, promising we will not be alone when we pass through deep waters or face the fires of trials:

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

**“In a world often drenched in pain, suffering, and injustice, it is a gift to remember that we are formed and made by a God who loves us and doesn't leave us.** We often feel compelled to *earn* our worth and belovedness, but the One who grants each breath affirms our inherent worth. In light of God's infinite love, we are beloved, the very fibers of our being woven with care. **We can't work our way to receiving God's compassion. It's already there**—as present as the twinkling stars in the sky, as near as the clouds of breath on a cold night.

**“You are a blessing because the One from whom all blessings flow sees you, knows you, and calls you by name.** When you are facing impossibilities, as Mary did, it's not your productivity or power that will push you through, but the grace of God. This divine assurance doesn't clarify every outcome or guarantee a life of ease—Mary's path, like many before and after, was fraught with challenges. Yet, **this promise of Love that makes a way when there is no way offers us hope that we do not face our challenges alone.** As we journey into the Advent season, may you rest under the warmth of these truths.

**“By embracing our inherent blessedness as a starting point, we open our hearts to recognize and affirm the blessedness in others, which transforms our interactions and communities.** God's perfect love invites us to live out our belovedness by transforming our world with love and entering into the good work God's hand began weaving many years ago. This Advent, **consider your sacred place within the divine quilt.**” Let me close with this blessing from the resource material:

*You are a blessing—known, chosen, and called for a purpose. May you boldly live into this truth, recognizing and cherishing your inherent worth so that you may honor God's image in others. Trust in your belovedness as you enter the redemptive work God has invited you into this Advent season.*

Receive the message that you are a blessing!

Amen.