

Karen Hollis
Christmas Eve Sermon
Luke 2:1-20

My best friend was born in a refugee camp. Like Joseph and Mary, her parents were at the mercy of the government seizing power and creating a critical situation for the people. Her Chinese mother and Cambodian father were living in Cambodia in 1979 during the genocide of the Khmer Rouge regime. They were among the lucky ones. More than once her pregnant mother had to think fast and move quickly to keep them alive. Once she climbed a coconut tree to avoid being seen by members of the regime. They miraculously made their way to a refugee camp in Thailand, where my friend was born. Where was God in the midst of it all?

Pregnant and traveling, Mary continues to be faithful to her “yes” to God. She has no choice in the matter; power hungry emperor Augustus in a grand gesture of establishing his rule over Palestine, calls all men and their families to their home towns so they can be registered for tax collection. But God is not in the emperor’s plans.

God is doing something far more important. God is sending a messenger through time and space to shepherds in a field, tending their sheep. These people of humble means and far from the trappings of social standing, see the angel appear in a wave of fear and awe. “Do not be afraid!” “Um, ok, go ahead . . .” The news is a gift of which they never dreamt. News that will forever change their lives – “a Saviour! Let us go and see!”

The shepherds find the wholly exhausted Mary, she and her husband overwhelmed with joy at the birth of their son. For all they know, the miracle this night is contained within their newly born family, safely nestled in their care. Mary knows what the angel told her about who Jesus is, though in this moment, it is just them: just a family. But this news is too big to contain, too mysterious to tuck away, too miraculous to not shout from the mountaintops! God has heard us and God is born this night in a humble place to humble people, people fleeing from danger, people in pain, people with no hope, in grief, in conflict, lonely and cold, the gathered, to you and to me. God is born this night to people who are ready for the news that God's love is here to change our lives and transform the world. Thanks be to God! Amen

Let us join with the choir of angels this night in singing our praise to God!
Angels we have heard on high #38.