

Sermon for Advent IV Year C  
December 24, 2006  
St. Mary of the Hills, Blowing Rock  
The Rev. Jeanne Finan

**Come in! Come in!**

Mary sets out and goes with haste into the mountains.  
The news she just received from the angel Gabriel seems absolutely impossible.  
And yet, she has just said yes to that impossible.

She goes to see Elizabeth.  
Immediately.

Mary arrives on the doorstep  
and,  
without one word,  
Zechariah opens the door.

Elizabeth catches sight of Mary from across the room  
and her own baby leaps in her womb.

Elizabeth shrieks with joy!

*Mary!*  
*Honey! Come in!*  
*Come on in this house!*  
*Come in! Come in!*

And come in Mary does indeed.  
(In fact, Luke's gospel tells us, she not only comes in, she stays for three months!)  
Now that is friendship.  
Or perhaps, as some believe Mary and Elizabeth were related--  
that is kinship.

Regardless,  
to welcome someone into your home for three months--that is love!

Mary sets out and goes with haste to see Elizabeth.  
She knows Elizabeth will take her in—no matter what.  
She knows Elizabeth will believe her.  
She knows Elizabeth will offer wisdom and comfort.  
She knows Elizabeth will shriek with joy just to see her face.

All that seems expected.  
But this gospel story is so filled with the unexpected.  
Jesus has not even been born  
and already the world is starting to turn a bit upside down.

After all, Elizabeth is much too old to have a child.  
Yet, she is pregnant, joyfully pregnant.

Her husband Zechariah, a revered Temple priest--  
and you know how priests love to talk--  
well, forget talking because Zechariah is mute at the moment.  
He doesn't even have a small speaking part in today's drama.

This young and insignificant girl Mary is unmarried—  
engaged, yes,  
but not wed—  
yet she, too, like Elizabeth, is impossibly and suddenly pregnant.

Not for a moment  
does Elizabeth criticize or judge Mary  
or even ask questions.  
Elizabeth immediately rejoices.  
*Come in, Mary! Come in!*  
Light overcomes darkness.  
Love overcomes judgment.

Elizabeth is also the first  
to bless Mary's child who is to come.  
And she blesses Mary, too,  
Elizabeth's arms and heart are wide-open.

Elizabeth offers unconditional love.  
She offers joy and hope.  
Even in the face of all that seems impossible,  
Elizabeth sees this baby of Mary's  
as making all things possible.

That is the real story here.  
It is Elizabeth's love,  
her open arms, her immediate blessing,  
that begin to unlock the truth  
of love's incarnation for Mary.

Luke's gospel has Mary singing out—  
the poetic beauty of the *Magnificat*--  
yet this is no sweet lullaby.

This is a song about an awesome God who turns things topsy-turvy—  
lifting up the lowly,  
taking away the wealth of the rich,  
tossing the politically powerful off the throne,  
feeding those who hunger.

An awesome God who says,  
*Come in, Come in*  
to those who have been repeatedly told  
*Keep out! Keep out!*

Mary's song gives a clear message:  
there is no obstacle that God cannot overcome.

There is no obstacle that God cannot overcome.

An angel comes to Mary and asks the impossible.  
And Mary says,  
*Yes.*  
*Come in. Come in.*

Mary's strength and power  
are in her willingness to be weak,  
to surrender to God completely.

Mary may be young and poor,  
but make no mistake:  
she is a strong woman.

It takes an enormous amount of backbone and belief  
to invite God to come completely into your being—  
not just into your mind, not just into your heart,  
but to welcome God  
to completely inhabit your body,

*Come in! Come in!*  
There is hope. There is joy. There is possibility.

That is where we are this last Sunday of Advent.  
On the brink  
of impossible possibility.

We are about to take that last step of Advent.  
This one morning  
is all we have of Advent IV this year.  
This evening  
we will walk right into Christmas.

But this morning is a time to come quietly.

To take these last few moments of Advent  
and hush the sounds of all that is busy and loud  
and demanding in our lives.

Slow down.  
Be still.

Listen.

We, too, will hear those words  
that make all hearts sing:

*Oh, honey!*  
*Come in! Come in!*