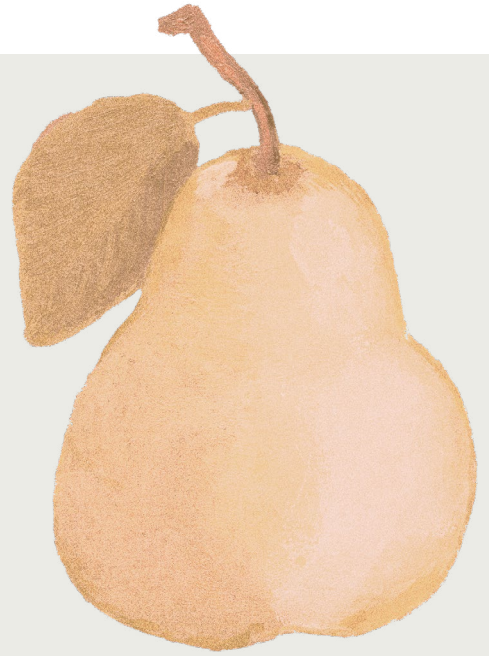


Gifts *of the* Mother

A Five-Week Sermon Series Beginning the First Sunday in Advent



OVERARCHING MESSAGE:

Seeing the Christmas story through the life of Mary has much to teach us about the nature of God.

PRIMARY NEED ADDRESSED:

Finding true hope, peace, joy, and love this Advent season and beyond.

SERIES SUMMARY:

Traditional understandings of the Trinity cast God in solely masculine terms. But Scripture tells us that God possesses both masculine and feminine attributes. Following the season's liturgical themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ in the world, we will discover in Mary attributes of the Sacred Feminine, revealing aspects of God that are often overlooked. At the end of the journey, we will have gained a more expansive and complete image of God, while discovering our own personal connection to the Christmas story.

Week 1: Hope (Incarnation)

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 1 (emphasis on vv. 26-27, 31); Psalm 139:7-15¹

MESSAGE:

Christmas tells the story of the Incarnation, but Scripture reminds us that God's creative work of incarnation—the act of combining matter and Spirit, infusing all life with Their divine DNA—has been taking place long before the Incarnation in the person of Jesus. The first thing Scripture teaches us about God is that They are a Creator. Not only that, but They *delight* in their creation. We find hope in knowing our God is continually creating, renewing, and healing. Returning to our origin story, we are invited to reclaim our identity as unique and sacred creations, remembering that we are “very good,” and we are challenged to consider how we might reflect our unique image of divine goodness to the world.

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Spend fifteen minutes listening to Imaginative Prayer #1: The Incarnation.²

Week 2: Peace (The Annunciation)

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:26-37

MESSAGE:

Peace is not the absence of disturbance; it's *freedom from* it. Disturbance in life is inevitable, but how we respond in the midst of disturbance is informed by our faith. Mary experienced a disturbance so great it changed the course not only of her life, but of countless lives to come. In the pregnant pause between Gabriel's pronouncement and Mary's yes, we consider the possibility that she could have answered differently. In this space, we see Mary grounded in Sacred Feminine power as evidenced by her openness, receptivity, and heart-centered discernment. We are invited to consider how these attributes might inform our response to the present disturbances in our own lives, going forth with the assurance that true and lasting peace is possible.

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Spend fifteen minutes listening to Imaginative Prayer #2: The Annunciation.

Week 3: Joy (The Visitation)

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:39-56

MESSAGE:

The story of the Visitation allows us to see attributes of the Sacred Feminine at work in both Mary and Elizabeth. In Elizabeth, we see a woman who is intuitive, accepting, and relational. She receives Mary with openness and love, and her prophetic declaration serves as a holy mirror for Mary, reflecting the truth of who she is. Mary, in turn, is receptive, responding to Elizabeth's declaration with joy and gratitude. The story of the Visitation invites us to acknowledge the Elizabeths in our own lives—the people who help us see ourselves with clarity, courage, and joy—and challenges us to consider the relationships in which we are called to be an Elizabeth for someone else.

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Spend fifteen minutes listening to Imaginative Prayer #3: The Visitation.

Week 4: Love (Labor)

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 2:1-7

MESSAGE:

The primal act of birthing stands in stark contrast to the quaint, peaceful, sterilized images we see printed on so many Christmas cards. It is here, in Mary's act of birthing Jesus, that Sacred Feminine power is on full display. Birth is messy, painful, and extremely vulnerable, yet birthing new life is the ultimate act of sacred love. When God created us, She placed us in Her perpetual cycle of love: birth, death, and new life. This ongoing creative process we exist within is often messy, it can be painful, and it always requires vulnerability, presenting countless opportunities to surrender to Love. This is our spiritual work: to let go, and let go, and let go even more. With each act of letting go, we create gestational space; it is in this space that Love labors, working for transformation that leads to new life.

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Spend fifteen minutes listening to Imaginative Prayer #4: Labor.

Week 5: Christ

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:1-14

MESSAGE:

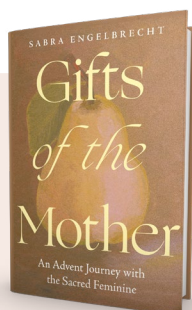
We end at the beginning, with the Incarnation. The Word became flesh and lived among us. Jesus came into the world to be Immanuel, God with Us, all the while reflecting this truth: We are created in Love, by Love, for Love. Once we internalize our own sacred creation, once we believe that we, too, are a holy work of incarnation, then the ability to see that same divine nature in others naturally follows. When we live from this story, the gifts we so desperately pray for each Advent—hope, peace, joy, and perhaps most of all love—begin to materialize in our lives, and in the world, in lasting, even eternal ways.

WEEKLY PRACTICE:

Spend ten minutes listening to Guided Meditation: Good Is the Body.

¹Throughout the series, consider referencing biblical translations that use gender-inclusive language.

²Audio recordings of guided imaginative prayers can be found at <https://www.sabraengelbrecht.com/guided-prayers> or on the Gifts of the Mother podcast on Spotify at <https://open.spotify.com/show/0gogEVyDvu7wbFhtnV2fxC?si=-5da8d8b61b1d475b>.



Gifts of the Mother

An Advent Journey with the Sacred Feminine

BY SABRA ENGELBRECHT