

15 December 2010
Advent 3 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“God the Father: Faithful Father”

Text: Luke 1:46-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

Zechariah gave us a picture of God our heavenly Father as a **rejoicing** father. Just as Zechariah rejoiced over the birth of his son, John, so your Father in heaven rejoices over you when you are born from above in Holy Baptism. And He still has great joy in you.

Joseph gave us a picture of God our heavenly Father as a **protecting** father. Just as Joseph protected Mary and Jesus, so your Father in heaven protects you from the enemies of your life that seek you harm: sin, death, and the devil.

But what earthly father can give us a picture of our heavenly Father’s faithfulness? I can think of none. God’s faithfulness, the Scriptures say, reaches above the heavens. (Psalm 108). Ours struggles to get out of bed in the morning. And yet we do have a picture of His faithfulness, in the Scriptures. For every page of Scripture is dripping with God’s faithfulness. His faithful words, His faithful deeds, His faithful love.

He is a faithful Father to Adam and Eve after they sinned.

He is a faithful Father to Noah, keeping him and his family safe in the ark.

He is a faithful Father to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in all their adventures, in all their ups and downs, in all their failures.

He is a faithful Father to Joseph in Egypt.

He is a faithful Father to Israel, bringing them out of Egypt.

He is a faithful Father to David, even when David was at his most unfaithful - to his wife and his God.

He is a faithful Father to Solomon, even when Solomon decided that 600 gods are better than one.

He is a faithful Father to Elijah and Elisha, when for speaking the Word of God they get a bounty put on their heads.

He is a faithful Father to Daniel and the three young men, rescuing them from a furnace’s fiery flame and some lion’s hungry jaws.

He is a faithful Father to Israel, disciplining them when they need it, and restoring them when they repent.

He is a faithful Father to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, sustaining them in very hard times.

He is a faithful Father throughout the Old Testament. Always burning with jealousy for His children and always wanting to give them the very best, even when all they wanted was the junk food of false gods.

Yet all this faithfulness was simply the prelude to His even greater faithfulness, when in the fulness of time, He sent His Son to be our Saviour. The Son of God become a son of man, so that we sons of men might be sons of God. The Son of God came to our home, that we might live in His. This is what Mary confessed, when Gabriel came and told her that God's faithfulness was now happening *in* her and *through* her: ***"He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."***

To His offspring forever, which now includes you and me. For we are children of Abraham and inheritors of the same promises. A *new* Israel - the *same* faithful Father. A new Israel born from above in Holy Baptism, that the promises made to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ Jesus would now be ours. And they are, for ***He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.***

And surely He has done it. The faithful Son of our faithful Father came down, and through His life and death, through His resurrection and ascension, and now through His Word and Sacraments, He is fulfilling His promise to sanctify us - keeping us in His grace and care and making us holy. And He will not stop. He is a faithful Father.

A faithful Father even when we are less than faithful. When we are confused, when we despair, when we wander in sin, when we doubt His faithfulness, when we question His love and His ways - when we act like all those folks in the Old Testament! - still He is faithful to us as well, still He is jealous, still He calls us back to Himself and His love.

This is surely a faithfulness that reaches above the heavens. We all have our limits, when "enough is enough," and our patience, our love, our understanding, is used up. But it is not so with our faithful Father. For in Christ Jesus, His love and forgiveness for us is limitless. You can never sin too much to be forgiven - all sin was atoned for on the cross. Which doesn't mean we can go do whatever we want; it means we can go do whatever HE wants, and not worry. For as He has been faithful in the past, so He will be faithful to us.

And so old Zechariah and Elizabeth can have a baby in their old age and rejoice. A virgin can conceive and bear a son, and Joseph can take her to be his wife and serve as their protector. And you and I can live in this confidence, too; whatever comes your way. That is what Advent teaches us - that just as God came once in Bethlehem, *as He had promised*, so He is coming now, *as He promised*, and so He

is coming again, *as He promised*. For in truth, there is nothing more sure in all this world than the Word and promise of God.

So as we draw closer to the end of this Advent season, and soon will have all four candles on our wreath lit, it is with this confidence: that even as we are counting down the weeks and days to the celebration of the birth of our Saviour, so our God is counting down the weeks and days until the celebration of our new life with Him in heaven. Your Father is faithful. He will do it. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.