MM Fall Blue Sheet Number 8 — Advent 3 — 2014

The Beginning of Hanukkah — Last week of Fall

Morgan's Moment…

They put a photo in front of me…
my daughter and granddaughter did..
blurry black and white.
"What's this?" my words as I peered…
"Your next great-grandchild…"
displayed in ultra sound.
Everyone was beaming
even the dad stood proudly by
as I had my first look.
I'm sworn to secrecy about
whose baby it is.
and when it may arrive.
Why does it remind of Christmas…
a story about the birth of Jesus…
the wonder at him in the womb?
Luke can't find anyone not in awe…
shepherds and angels…
and old Simeon and Anna too.
In our crowd were soon-to-be
aunts and uncles
and a grandma and grandpa…
not to mention the
great grandparents!
and so many not present.
Jesus is not the first to be adored
long before his birth day…
loved from before the beginning.
The expectancy of advent season
is especially awesome…
when you've seen what's coming.
— Art Morgan

BOOK CORNER

Here's a book about facing the last years of life realistically and positively and wisely, with courage. It is coincidence that I am reading this book by a Rabbi during the week of Hanukkah.

"The December Project" comes out of an extended conversation between Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Sara Davidson. The subtitle is ***"An Extraordinary Rabbi and a Skeptical Seeker Confront Life's Greatest Mystery."***

Chapters are not long and to the point and not dismal at all.

THEOLOGY IN THE DARK

I had my radio plugged to me ear before dawn a couple of weeks ago and heard a most remarkable speech. It was by that 17 year-old girl named Malala when she won the Nobel Peace Prize. The youngest ever. I was moved by her speech. One of the things she said was:

"I dedicate the Nobel Peace Prize money to the Malala Fund, to help give girls quality education, everywhere, anywhere in the world and to raise their voices. The first place this funding will go to is where my heart is, to build schools in Pakistan—especially in my home of Swat and Shangla."

Then just last night I heard the chilling report of five Taliban gunmen entering a school in her native Pakistan. The final report this morning said:

"The Taliban has killed dozens of children at a Peshawar school in a revenge mission for Pakistani schoolgirl activist Malala Yousafzai being awarded the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize."

By morning the total was 132 children slaughtered.

Malala's response:

"I, along with millions of others around the world, mourn these children, my brothers and sisters - but we will never be defeated."

Whether you see the Bible birth and infancy stories of Jesus as fact or legend you have to include Herod's slaughter of the innocents in Matthew if you are going to include Luke's angels praising God. Here's where the mind asks questions in the dark. Why do humans slaughter infants and children? Why then, and why now?

And how can we glory at the wondrous intervention of a God in the world, preserving some while others are slaughtered? What happened to our promised Messiah?

We are like alumni expecting the new Coach to bring in a new era of victory. Or a new President or a new Preacher or a new Senator or a new Messiah.

Here's the truth at Christmas. There has never been a chosen one who lived up to our expectations. In fact, it is predictable that many, if not most, will end up crucified in one way or another. We fail them or they fail us.

Christmas tells us of our hope in God. Christmas reveals that God has not yet fulfilled our hopes. Or is it that we have not yet fulfilled God's hopes for us? Or is God not what we imagine?

We all work on our theology in the dark.

But something in us does not give up hope. We sing "*Don't let the lights go out.*" We sing "*Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuel*." And we stand in unity with Malala, shot by the Taliban yet living to proclaim, "*We will never be defeated*" even as Taliban still slaughter the innocent.

Here's another of my "Christmas Prayer from the Deli" —

"On this night of darkness
when we are sobered by troubles in our world
We lift our lights to declare:
that faith is stronger than doubt; that hope is stronger than despair;
that love is stronger than hate; that light is stronger than darkness.
May faith, and hope and love and the light of God be present in us
and in all the world this night."

— Art Morgan, December 16, 2014