

(Play four bars of "Yorktown" – "The world's turned upside down...")

That's what we've been talking this whole Advent, how we live in a world turned upside down. Another word for that is, "disrupted."

Disruption is what we've been dealing with since March –

Profound disruption of everything we consider normal.

And now comes Christmas and for many it's so sad not to be able to be with our aging parents... or if you are an aging parent, to not be with your kids and precious grandchildren.

To be praying for our friends and relatives who are healthcare workers;

To watch our economy take hit after hit, to witness the discord and disruption of even our political processes. Nothing is normal!

And look at us – Christmas Eve on Zoom!

But think of that first Christmas Eve... how disruptive it was for them – this young couple, whose lives had been completely upended.

They were in Bethlehem, not at home in Nazareth.

Mary was having her first child not with the help of a midwife, or her mother or aunties, or even in a safe and clean place;

Joseph was unable to work during this enforced sojourn to Bethlehem at the behest of the occupying Romans, which was followed soon after by a longer sojourn into Egypt, when an angel told him that it was not going to be safe for this baby to live in Herod's kingdom... and so he took Mary and Jesus and left everything that was familiar. Disruption.

Those shepherds were settling in for a normal night on their hillside –

drinking, belching, whatever shepherds do – and their whole routine was disrupted, and their whole view of reality was disrupted by this colossal gathering of angels filling the sky with song, announcing good news.

And then they ran into Bethlehem, further disrupting the reality that

Mary and Joseph were beginning to settle into, as they brought confirmation of everything they'd been told by the angel.

That holy night was a most disrupted night, as is ours.
And entering into that disruption, with all the vulnerability of a human infant
born into poverty and homelessness, God signaled:

You are not alone. I am not leaving you alone in disruption.

“But,” God says, “I have a disruption for you too –
and it’s bigger than the ones you’re facing. If you let me,
I will disrupt your view of reality. That what you think is normal is not.
I will disrupt your view of your enemies.
I will disrupt your view of the poor.
I will disrupt your view of coziness and comfort.

I invite you to expand your view of hospitality –
to make space those you don’t know, may not even like or approve of.
I invite you to expand your view of forgiveness.
I invite you to expand your view of love.”

What turned the world upside down is love, and it has been turning it.
And the more we add our love to God’s love,
the more we open a space inside of ourselves for God’s love,
to add to our love, which make it huger than we think we can hold –
but guess what? God rewires us to be able to hold it –
That is how we bring this world right side up again.

Disrupted for good, that’s what we are. Disrupted for good.
Amen.

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"
¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Isaiah 62:6-12

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night
they shall never be silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest, and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.
The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have
labored; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD,
and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.
Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples.
The LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion,
"See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him."
They shall be called, "The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD";
and you shall be called, "Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken."