



Anglican Network in Canada

Office of the Diocesan Bishop
The Right Reverend Charlie Masters
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My dear brothers and sisters,

As Christmas 2014 draws close at hand, I send you and all you love warm Christmas greetings and blessings from Bishop Stephen and Nona, Bishop Trevor and Dede, Bishop Don and Trudy, Bishop Malcolm and Mary Lou, Bishop Ron and Jan, as well as from my wife Judy and me. It is our prayer that you would experience, more and more, the joy and peace that "*the good news of great joy which is for all people*" brings because Christ the Savior has been born in Bethlehem for us.

I confess I have never previously thought of Romans 4 as a particularly "Christmasy" passage, or even an Advent passage, but truly Romans 4:20 and 21 certainly does pertain to all the events around Jesus' birth.

Speaking of Abraham, it says: "*...no distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*"

The key words are the "promise of God". What made Abraham the father of faith, is that, in the face of lots of obvious difficulties and evident impossibilities, he remained convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

So it was that Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son in their old age.

And all the promises concerning the coming King and his birth happened just as God had promised.

He is able to do what he has promised.

In Isaiah 7:14, God promised, "*therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shalt call his name Immanuel.*" And He caused the Virgin Mary to conceive and give birth to a son because God is able to do what he had promised.

So it was that when the Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked "*where is he who has been born King of the Jews?*," those who knew the promises of God recorded in Micah 5:2 said "*in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it was written by the prophet: And "you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."*

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And how did God do this such that Joseph and Mary, who lived far in the north in Nazareth, would be moved all the way to Bethlehem in the south? Luke 2 tells us: "*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered... [then] all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.*" (Luke 2:1, 3-6 ESV)

The God who is able to do what he has promised used a tax decreed by Augustus Caesar of the whole known world, of all things, to move Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem to fulfill what he had promised centuries earlier.

He is able.

And so dear friends, it is a wise person who heeds the message of the Angels and responds in personal faith to our promise-keeping God. His promise of "*good news of great joy to all people*" holds true because he who promised is true and he is able.

When the shepherds rushed to Bethlehem to see the thing that the angels had spoken of, no surprise, they found him and everything exactly as the angels spoke because the God who sent the Angels with this message is true, faithful and able.

Whatever may lie before us as individuals and congregations, as families and as a diocese we can know that the God who sent Jesus in fulfillment of all his promises and will return as he has promised is well able to care for us. He will lead us and cause us to bear fruit for his kingdom, more and more, and do all he promised. He is able.

Dear friends, even when our path is difficult and our world seems dark, we can rejoice because our confidence - and our joy - is firmly anchored in our promising-keeping God. So rejoice, and again I say rejoice!

Every blessing to you and all you love this Christmas and throughout the coming year as we await and prepare for his coming!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, starting with a plus sign followed by the name "Chad".