

Sermon for Sunday, December 13, 1970 by Andrew A. Jumper, Pastor
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri

"GOD IN SEARCH OF A MARY"
St. Luke 1:26-38

Text: "'Here am I, said Mary, 'I am the Lord's Servant, as you have spoken, so be it.'" St. Luke 1:38 (N. E. B.)

Today you and I live under the shadow of a great threat. The inventive genius of man has now produced a thermo-nuclear weapon capable of destroying mankind. Those today who speak of surviving a nuclear war are talking nonsense. There will be no survival--no real survival. And suppose, by some strange miracle, one did survive. For what would he have survived? He would find around him, as he crawled mole-like out of his hole in the ground, only a wasteland of radioactive desolation. The earth would no longer bear its harvest nor the trees bring forth fruit. The sheep and the oxen and the cattle of the field would be no more. And in this stark land of nothingness, for what would one have survived? And it would not be just America and Russia who would be destroyed. The destructive powers that would be unleashed in an all-out nuclear war would in all likelihood poison the whole earth and make it unfit for habitation. Perhaps Nevill Schute was not too far wrong in his significant book, "On the Beach", when he depicted the death of all living creatures from radiation. It is at least a nightmarish reality that should give us deep concern.

How is one to act? How is one to respond to the terror of the days in which we find ourselves living? As the tensions mount from day to day, as the threat to life grows more real, is there nothing God can do? Is he helpless and impotent? Have we outstripped and outgrown a God who is no longer able to act? If God has not lost control and if he is not overwhelmed by the awesome magnitude of the world's problems, then what can God do?

Yes, what can God do? I would like to suggest first of all that God can give us peace today. Like Martha who complained to Jesus, our world today is anxious and troubled about many things. As some wit has put it, "Modern communication is wonderful. Today we can worry about things we wouldn't even hear about fifty years ago." More people are troubled and perplexed, filled with tensions and fears and anxieties, than ever before. We are told that every other hospital bed is occupied by someone who has snapped under the strain and who needs emotional help. My holiletics professor in seminary used to say, "Boys, preach to the broken heart, there is one in every pew."

And isn't this what Christmas is all about? When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the very heavens could not contain themselves and the angels broke forth in exaltation. There, above the hillside overlooking the little town where the Saviour lay, they sang to the shepherds, "peace on earth..." And for the anxious, troubled heart, for the life that is possessed with fears, God can give peace if the door is opened from the inside. Dr. George W. Crane once said, "there would be much less strain on men and women if they teamed up with God as a daily partner. Indeed, in that event, psychiatry would almost pass out of existence." One of the last things Jesus ever said to his disciples had to do with peace. Do you remember his words? "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."