So once every seven years, on average, Advent 4 falls on Christmas Eve. You, you here in church now, you are the faithful. I would say that you get a gold star by your name in heaven, but we know I don’t know that. It may be that you are rejecting the overwhelming consumerism of the culture, or it just as easily may well be that you, and I should include myself here, we are the most broken and most in need of what church has to offer.

As much as my Pentecostal grandmother, who happened to be downright mean, has left me with an aversion to the phrase being “led by the Spirit,” there is much truth that if you are in relationship with God, then God does the leading. I would put forth that whatever the reason, God has done the leading as to why you are here this morning.  The conversation we overhear among David, Nathan and God (speaking through the prophet Nathan), tells us that God does the leading. We don’t lead God. Although the story from 1st Samuel appears in our Advent lectionary because the story explains the concept of the phrase Son of David, it is God who makes God’s house in David, who chooses this lineage to be special. Yes, God enabled David to be king, anointed him, the youngest brother out playing with, I mean tending, the sheep, Yet it is God who rejects David’s bright idea to make God a house. Instead God will make a house in David. God says in so many words, “Don’t want a house, didn’t ask for house. Not gonna have it.”  And so like David, we should also be open to God making a house in each of us.

This act of God asserting God’s will over and against the will of man is pretty pervasive in the Bible. Although ***we*** tend to like to tame God for our own purposes particularly at Christmas with all the television specials, and glitz and glitter, what we find instead is that God is not tame and God’s works are always counter cultural. The Song of Mary, one of four places in the Bible where poetry is in the mouth of women, echoes this upside down world that God favors. God doesn’t want to be tame or boxed in a house. God is about scattering the proud, casting down the mighty, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, sending the rich away empty, for God is merciful and plans on that, always and everywhere.  We can truly see the counterculture nature of God most acting through us; it stands out against the normal.

This tipping the world a different direction feels like God just doesn’t want to be boxed in,… in fact, in the gospel of John, the beautiful phrase that God “dwelt among us,” is better translated as “pitched a tent among us,”  or stayed in a tent. Because as in 1st Samuel, God didn’t want a house of timber and stones, God makes US a house and dwells within us, moves with us as we move, in a tent of flesh and bones.

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Which brings me to Mary. A woman of flesh and bones just like us. As every good Episcopalian does, I wrestle with exactly who Mary is.  Part of the issue for me and many others, is that the Anglican church, particularly with Mary, often sits squarely between the Roman Catholics and the Reformed. In the Roman Catholic world, Mary is submissive and has no choice but to be the God-bearer, the *theotokos.* Conversely in the Reformed tradition, Mary’s free will allows her to say yes or no of her own will, to choose to be the servant to God and bear the son. She is either the “favored” or “blessed” one and therefore is extraordinary, OR the extraordinary thing about her is her ordinariness, because she is member of the “priesthood of all believers.”

Instead, however, we can look upon Mary’s obedience as neither optional nor forced. She freely offers herself as a servant, because for her, to embrace her identity as the Mother of God is the only choice that is true to her calling, because it is consistent with who she actually is.  And this is exactly how God is calling you as well.  Frederick Buechner puts it this way: “God calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”  When we bear the light of Christ in the world, we become like Mary, our deep gladness can meet the world’s hunger. We can become exactly who God is calling us to be. Freely offering ourselves to be exactly consistent with who we are and bearing light into the world.

And as we bear the light, reflecting it, we give praise and glory to the one to whom it is due: the Incarnate one, now incarnate in us though the Spirit, as the one who knows no house, but only desires to tent with us, move with us, dwell with us, as we are called to the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep hunger, in Jesus’ name.