



**FIRST AND CENTER**  
**Pastor's Blog**  
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There are years when the reality of life mirrors the texts that lead up to Christmas so perfectly that you'd think we'd been thrown back in time. Sadly, the true case is that human beings change little over millennia. Last Sunday, we read both the Magnificat and the Benedictus (Mary's and Zechariah's songs respectively). Mary sings about God "scattering the proud," "bringing down the powerful from their thrones," "filling the hungry and sending the rich "away empty." I read this the week that Congress passed and the President signed a tax bill that will largely benefit the wealthy and do nothing

at all for the poor and working class. Zechariah speaks of God giving "light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" and guiding "our feet into the way of peace." I read this as homeless citizens of Hartford nightly find their way to our Church House for some food and to connect with shelter, in a week where we are holding a memorial service for the homeless who have died this past year, and in a year when our country seems to move closer and closer to war with North Korea. The ancient texts speak to our time.

If the world in which we live mirrors theirs, then the hope which they inhabited also can come to us. Zechariah spoke in future tense about his infant son, full of faith in what God would do with John. Mary, so interesting, speaks in past tense. She believes that the hope is already achieved by the power of God. This hope lies deep in the history of God walking with her people. This hope lies deep in her heart, mind and spirit. This hope lies in her womb.

In his poem, "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats wondered "what rough beast slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" Well, maybe. But I'm putting my money, my heart, my love, my hope on Mary's son, born and born anew in each of us. Blessings for Christmas.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Pastor