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Luke: 1, 68–79  
Luke 3:1–6

## PEACE HARVEST

Many of you are familiar with an author named Anne Lamott. She is a Christian author and motivational speaker; and, you may or may not know, she is a big fan and a participant in the phenomenon of *Facebook*. In fact, she has so many Facebook friends she's called "the people's author."

Well, Anne tells the story of doing a book tour in San Diego. She was nervous because it's always sunny there and she didn't want to have to wear shorts. (She decided that she never looks good in shorts.) And so she was anxious. Even though she was well known and had given many book tours before, she was scared—fearful and worried about this particular book signing.

When she arrived, she noticed there was a poster in the area where she was to do her book signing. Koko is a resident of the San Diego Zoo. In this poster, Koko is holding a big bunch of bananas. Scrolled across the top are the words, "Mantra for the American jungle." Underneath are these words of instruction: Remain calm and share your bananas. Lamott quickly grabbed one of the pens she would be using for the book signing and scribbled in the inside of her index finger: RCSB. And whenever she was most anxious, she looked there at the index finger and her nervousness and her sense of being ill-at-ease went away.

We need a way to remember that we are still part of the good news story—a story which indeed we anticipate in Advent and which we experience in the cross. When we are tempted to forget that God is still trustworthy, we need something that will return us to the peace that was announced in all of our scripture readings—a peace that was preached by John the Baptist, and, in fact, by his father—a harvest of peace that was lived, in fact, by our Lord Jesus. Peace which comes only from experiencing forgiveness. Peace that is confronted and challenged by the way in which we live, especially in the west.

Remember that more money, more fame, more attention, more things will not bring you this peace. Do we need a better example than the news reports of the last couple of weeks? You see this world will always tell us to grab more while you can. Get more and more and don't let anyone else have what you have. But Jesus says don't waste your time gathering more stuff—stuff which will rot, stuff which will return to ashes. The only thing that will last is what you share with others. Remain calm. Share your bananas.

This first passage we read today is considered to be part of the literary tradition of the psalter. There are, in fact, at least three of these psalms in the beginning of Luke. In the Old Testament, the psalms functioned to tell of God's unchanging trustworthiness.

Listeners heard the psalms and they were reassured that God was indeed not against them, but was their protector and savior.

In Luke:1, before our reading, there's the magnificat—the song which retells how God is trustworthy in unexpected ways. The elect and the outcast are welcomed by God. The unclean and the poor—Samaritans, women, tax collectors, people of all sorts of conditions—are now offered the blessings of God's peace. And then we read today the song of Zacharia, where he declared God is trustworthy even when we are threatened with fear. Forgiveness overcomes even fear. And forgiveness leads us to that wonderful harvest of peace that we long for more than anything else.

Later in Luke, in the second chapter, there's a song where the speaker is someone who waits at the temple. Simeon is there and he proclaims God's trustworthiness. Just upon seeing the baby Jesus, seeing him carried into the temple by his parents, the first word of each of these songs has become their title from the Latin: The Magnificat; The Benedictus; The Nunc Dimittis. The first word of each passage of each psalm reminds us that God is at work in our world—in our world, in our lives.

God is at work offering us a harvest—a harvest that will feed our souls in the midst of our greatest challenges. Peace for us when we are distracted by worry. Peace for us when we are gripped by terror. Peace for us when we remember that Jesus has not forgotten us this Christmas. Let us not forget how many ways Jesus is a continuation and fulfillment of God's ongoing relationship with Israel. And let us not forget that the relationship with Israel was to be an example and pattern for God's relationship for all people.

This Christmas let us harvest peace by what we say. Let us harvest peace by what we share of our time. And let us remember to remain and share our bananas.

Amen.