

Advent 4
December 20, 2015

“The Miracle of Mary’s Baby Makes Us Sing for Joy”

LUKE 1:39-55

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!” ⁴⁶ And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”

Think of the change that came into Mary’s life. She is a young woman about to be married to a carpenter named Joseph. Suddenly an angel appears to her with the words “Greetings you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!” Mary was greatly troubled by these words. She wonders what kind of greeting this might be. These words radically change her life and ours: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

Anytime a mother conceives and gives birth to a child it is something very special. We call it the miracle of birth. With Mary there is no seed of a man involved in the conception process. The angel Gabriel tells her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy to be born will be called the Son of God.” As further proof that God can perform the impossible in the womb of Mary, the angel tells her about her cousin Elizabeth who was old and barren is now six months pregnant with the baby John.

And how did Mary react to this angel’s message? It appears that almost immediately she gets ready and hurries to visit her cousin Elizabeth and share the good news with her. Mary believed what the angel Gabriel told her but she wants further evidence that all of this is true.

My eyes of faith and your eyes of faith have seen the evidence of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. We have seen him lying in a manger in Bethlehem and worshipped him as our Lord and God. With eyes of faith we confess: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.” With Mary we want further confirmation. We hurry to see more evidence. We can’t get enough. As one of our former members Luella Bestul once said, “The more you see of Jesus, the more you want to see.”

Mary was not disappointed with her visit to Elizabeth. She becomes overwhelmed with what Elizabeth says about the miracle that was in her womb. She bursts forth in a song of praise we call the Magnificat. We ask our Lord Jesus to do the same for us. Send us his Holy Spirit to overwhelm us with the miracle of his birth and cause us to burst forth in songs of joy, once again during these Christmas celebrations.

Now stand in awe. Be amazed. Be overwhelmed as Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. It appears from what is said here that Mary paid this visit to Elizabeth immediately after the angel Gabriel appears to her. "At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea." That's a long trip for a young woman to take by herself from Nazareth to the Judean hills, about 80 miles. Mary has a secret, a secret to share with her cousin Elizabeth. She comes into the home of Elizabeth and greets her.

On the family farm people always seemed to be stopping into see us. They never bothered calling ahead. They didn't knock on the door. They simply came in and said, "Good morning" or "Hello." and walked in. So it was with Mary dropping in to see her cousin.

Mary, Mary, wonderful Mary, you are in for a big surprise. It says that when Elizabeth heard her greeting the six month old baby John leaped in her womb. And this was no ordinary kick. This was a leap in the womb. And what caused the baby John to leap in his mother's womb? It was the presence of his Lord and God in the womb of his mother's cousin Mary.

Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit as she shouts out with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" This is a loud cry, a loud shout of praise that comes from Elizabeth. "Mary you are so blessed." "Mary, blessed is the child in your womb." She even calls Mary the mother of her Lord. The Holy Spirit has convinced her that this tiny embryo in the womb of Mary is her Lord.

How far along is Mary? My dear Christians, Mary has just been told by the angel that she would have this miracle baby who is the Son of the Most high God. Every indication is that she left to visit her cousin Elizabeth almost immediately. Conception has taken place. The baby inside Mary is so small that you would need a powerful microscope to see it. Yet because of the Holy Spirit Elizabeth sees this little child with the eyes of faith and believes he is her Lord and God. Mary did not have to wonder when this conception would take place. Elizabeth told her it had already happened.

With your eyes of faith this morning you see Mary walking into the room and greeting her cousin. With your eyes of faith you see the baby John leaping in the womb at the presence of the tiny little Christ child. With your eyes of faith you see this little embryo as your Lord and God from all eternity. This is all so real to you. How true are the words of John 20 that tells us, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing you might have life through his name."

Elizabeth has to tell Mary why little John kicked so hard in the womb. "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." Little baby John leaped for joy at the presence of Jesus in the same room with him. So we leap for joy as we come into the presence of God this Christmas to worship a tiny baby as our Lord and God. We do not sing, "O come let us admire him, O come let us admire him." We sing, "O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him."

Elizabeth is so thankful for the faith she shares with her cousin Mary. "Blessed is she who has

believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished." Yes, Elizabeth, your cousin Mary is truly blessed because she believed in this miraculous conception that would take place in her womb. She believed this tiny child is her Lord and God. She would name him Jesus because only he could save the world from sin. Today we are thankful to believe with other Christians this tiny baby is our Lord and God.

Elizabeth shouted with a loud voice when Mary came into the room. Now it's Mary's turn to respond to all these miracles that have been coming into her life. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble estate of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me." Mary was overwhelmed that a humble, lowly person such as she was chosen to bring the Savior into the world.

Lowly Mary was a very special person because she was chosen by God to bring Jesus into the world. We do not believe that she was without sin as some might teach today. We do not believe we should pray to Mary to help us when we have the privilege of going directly to Jesus. Yet we respect Mary because of what the Lord allowed her to do just as we respect Abraham for what the Lord allowed him to do, or the Apostle Paul.

Our God is also gracious and good to us in these last days. He gives us the privilege of bringing Jesus into the world. 2 Corinthians 4 says that we bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yesterday through teaching, and songs, and crafts we had the privilege of bringing Jesus to our Christmas for Kids. We might say that Mary was truly blessed, but if Mary could speak to us she would tell us how blessed we are.

Words keep flowing forth from Mary. "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation." You fear or respect your God for the mercy that flows from generation and also to you. "Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." The Hebrew word for mercy is "chesed." It means loyal and faithful love. You know that nothing can separate you from his love. The baby in the womb of Mary is evidence, supreme evidence of the Lord's mercy, loyalty and faithfulness.

More words flow forth like a fountain from Mary. "He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones and lifted up the humble." This tiny baby in the womb of Mary is our Mighty God, our Warrior God. "Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall, he lifts his voice and the earth melts." His kingdom of love lasts forever.

Mary cannot stop singing. When you are filled with joy because of the miracles God performs to save you, then you cannot keep silent. You must sing. "He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty." We probably won't have to worry about being hungry this Christmas. But there is a real hunger and longing and yearning we have to know that our sin is forgiven and we have peace with our God. So many thoughts come into our minds that are not right. So much shows us how empty and unacceptable to our God we are. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled." The tiny baby in the womb of Mary is the only one who can provide you and me with the forgiveness we desperately and the righteousness we cannot find in ourselves.

Keep singing Mary. We love your song for us. "He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever even as he said to our fathers." The Lord told Abraham one of his descendants would bless the whole world. Now that promise has come true within the womb of Mary. The promised Seed born from a woman will crush the devil's power.

Because this promise was kept you can open your Bible and trust that every promise you find there will also be fulfilled.

Mary spent three months with her cousin Elizabeth before the baby John was born. Those had to be precious moments together as they celebrated together the miracle that was in the womb of Mary just as we celebrate that miracle this week and throughout our lives. May Mary's song be your song.