

**Gospel: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]**

*We are presented with Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.*

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." [

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

So, we come to a fourth Sunday in Advent that time of the year and which we lift up the figure Mary and her holy calling to be the mother of the Christ child. We hear the word she utters out loud upon her arrival to her aunt Elizabeth where she is staying during the second half of the journey to birth. On two different occasions Mary witnesses some holy moments and utters words that we repeat almost every year in the church. They are words of a humble servant who hears the call of God, and even though it will upset her entire way of her life and not just hers but those around her. She willingly accepts the call of God to be the mother of the Messiah. The first time she utters memorable words is when an angel visits her and announces that she has been chosen to be the mother of the promise one. In response to that event, she does not react with great fear, which let's face it most of us would be frightened to death, she instead say: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then today upon going away and encountering the mother of the forerunner Jesus she utters these famous words of the Magnificat. This Sunday is one in which the world remembers these great acts of faith of Mary, However, I am going to take the risk of perhaps a slight snub to her and switch temporarily, the focus to Joseph in the context of these great remarks of Mary.

We can only imagine Joseph's response that day when Mary came and told him a Messenger of the Lord appeared to me, and by the way I'm going to have a baby of which you are not the biological father. We know subsequently that Joseph has a dream just about the time when he is getting ready to quietly dismiss this person, this woman whom he loves, in a very quiet way; but has a dream that tells him to do otherwise. But then a second part of the story occurs that we heard as the introduction verses of

today's gospel text. Mary leaves and goes to visit her relative Elizabeth. Joseph later apparently goes to pick her up and then take her to Bethlehem. But now he must be apart from this woman with whom he has betrothed his very future.

One wonders all the different things that were going through his mind. As I was contemplating the sermon for today I was, at that very moment, listening to the new CD album by Mumford & Sons. Have I promoted them enough? But literally as I was driving and thinking about this passage one of their new songs just came on. It is called Beloved. And as I heard the lyrics of this song it, I immediately repeated it and for me it captured perhaps some of the tug-of-war of emotion that Joseph May have felt when Mary said: "Hey I am going to go visit Elizabeth for the remainder of the pregnancy." Here are some of the lyrics to that song. As you hear it think of the emotions and thoughts that may have been going through the mind of Joseph as he sees Mary off to venture to another area to be with her older relative Elizabeth. See these words from his perspective.

I'd never seen you unkempt before  
As you whisper darling close the door

How have I not made a note of every word  
You ever said  
And time is not on our side, but I'll pretend  
That it's alright  
She says the Lord has a plan  
But admits it's pretty hard to understand

Before you leave  
You must know you are beloved  
And before you leave  
Remember I was with you

Are you afraid  
However could you not be  
In this rosy light  
This is strange  
I feel a hand come through the mirror  
Pointing at the light  
Point at the light we never see  
As you put your feathered arms over me

Before you leave  
You must know you are beloved  
And before you leave  
Remember I was with you  
And as you leave  
I won't hold you back beloved

Now I am not saying that Marcus Mumford, the writer of the song had Joseph and Mary in mind when these words came to him, pretty sure he probably didn't; but that is the great things about art and music. However, I will say that upon hearing them and thinking of his text it just seemed to connect. Mary was beloved. She was beloved by God, she was beloved by Elizabeth, she was beloved by Joseph, she is beloved by the church. She

is a beloved by us and because of her faith, because of Joseph's loyalty, we gather here in this place and know that we also are now beloved children of God.

We can come to the end of the season of Advent a time of watching, of preparing, of God's imminent arrival and call things good. We are blessed, we are beloved, to know that the Messiah has come to be among us, to save us, for the Mighty One has done great things for all,

and holy is God's name.

His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever." Amen.