

2<sup>nd</sup> Midweek Advent Service

Luke 1: 26 – 55

Pastor Arndt (12-9-20)

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we mentioned last week, Advent is a season when we begin to do things that are odd. We bring trees inside our homes. We light up our Christmas trees like... well, Christmas trees. There is one advent tradition, however, that sometimes gets overlooked. It is one of our favorite things to do... we call it, *waiting*.

Do you enjoy waiting? Is it a pleasant experience to be with you when you wait? The truth is, we loathe waiting. We have grown accustomed to searching the world for the things we desire and receiving them the next day via overnight shipping. When we are forced to wait it often brings out the worst in us. Our patience wears thin, our tempers become short. Anxiety and frustration consume us.

In our lesson for today we are offered a glimpse into a home where three people huddle together and wait for three months. There is no Google to guide them... only the lofty promises of God. Yet, when these three people wait, it brings out the best in them.

Join me for a few moments this evening and hold vigil alongside a dream team of waiters who cheer us, encourage us, and fill us with the goodness of God... all while waiting.

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Some time has passed since the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah. His wife Elizabeth would now be visibly pregnant. Gabriel has announced an even greater miracle to Mary. "*Your child will be the Son of God.*" The stage is set for a blessed meeting.

Mary travels to the home of Elizabeth. When she arrives, there is no talk of Zechariah (who can't talk). There is no discussion of doubt or despair between Mary and Joseph. (Remember, when Joseph learns that Mary is going to have a child, his first knee-jerk reaction is to call off their marriage.) There is not a trace of these things. All that we find is joy.

It starts with Elizabeth. Listen to her words. See if you can notice a not-so-subtle theme that keeps recurring.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

How many times does she use the word "*blessed*"? When she uses the word *blessed*, it is not some kind of wish or pious hope. Her faith simply listens to the word of God and states God's honest truth.

*"Mary, in spite of the crosses that you will bear, those crosses will be blessings. You will hold the Son of God in your arms so that God the Father can redeem you and hold you in his arms."*

The next one to join in the praise is Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist. Yet unborn, God has filled him with the Holy Spirit. John leaps for joy at the sound of the Gospel... and throughout his life never stops. Jesus will become greater and so will John's problems. But that matters nothing. John leaps when he hears the gospel and leaps even higher when he is able to proclaim that Gospel himself.

Finally, there is Mary. Her song, which we call the Magnificat, could also be given another title. I like to call it her "*He Has*" song.

Mary's life is filled with uncertainties. She will not have a home, a room, or a crib in which to lay her newborn child. Her family will be fugitives in Egypt while Herod searches for her child to kill him. She will wait for a quiet normalcy that will never come. Yet she sings,

*he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.*

*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones*

*He has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things*

*He has helped his servant Israel,*

*... just as he promised*

Mary's uncertain future rests comfortably in the knowledge of God's past.

How did this happen? How did such joy come about? The Holy Spirit inspired St. Luke to write these words.

Elizabeth was "*filled with the Holy Spirit.*" (Luke 1: 41). Gabriel tells Mary, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you.*" (Luke 1: 35). John the Baptist "*will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his is born.*" (Luke 1: 15)

Brothers and Sisters, advent is a time when we do things that are odd. We bring trees into our homes. We light up our homes with the light of Christ. And oddest of all... With the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we look to the promises of God, and wait with joy.

-Amen