

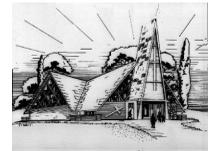


Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Fourth Sunday of Advent (Proper C)

God makes Himself lowly to lift up  
those of low estate!

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 1, 39–56:

**ESV** 26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

- 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.
- 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"
- 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.
- 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
- 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.
- 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,
- 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"
- 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.
- 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.
- 37 For nothing will be impossible with God."
- 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.
- 39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,
- 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
- 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,
- 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
- 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
- 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

- 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."
- 46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,
- 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
- 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
- 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
- 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
- 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
- 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;
- 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.
- 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
- 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."
- 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, sharpen our conscience, wake us up, renew us, prepare us for Your Salvation comes to us! Amen.*

• **Dear Citizens of God's Jerusalem!**

• What a beautiful story unfolds before us today! A story of joy! Two mothers, two pregnant mothers meeting and sharing their joy with one another. Have you noticed, when they speak they sing hymns, based on the old hymns of Israel. This is true for the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Mary sings, Zechariah sings, Simeon sings, the angels sing, the shepherds sing: Jesus is coming. His conception and birth are surrounded by hymns of joy!

• Who are these people who erupt in joyful hymns? Today we are introduced to Mary and Elizabeth: Young Mary, a virgin, unmarried, yet just received the good news from the angel, that she will bear a child, the Son of the Most High. She runs up to Elizabeth and greets her. Elizabeth, herself far too old for babies, is six months pregnant with the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist! That is miracle number two! And where these two meet the Holy Spirit starts to speak through both of them. By the way: through women- so much for the Bible being against women!

- The Son of the Most High is conceived in the virgin Mary, an insignificant girl, of lowly birth, by her own estate. She comes from Nazareth- what good can come from Nazareth, the people said! The contrast couldn't be greater! Mary was afraid when the angel greeted her, but she found favour with the Lord. Her fear turned into joy.
- When Mary greeted Elizabeth the baby, John the Baptist, leaped in her womb for joy! Even baby John cannot wait for the birth of Jesus! At this stage Jesus is only a small cell in Mary's womb, and already everything is exchanged. The barren is pregnant. The humble and lowly are blessed beyond comparison.
- Mary sings about it [52]: He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. Those who don't need God's mercy, because they think they can sort out their own problems, the strong are scattered. But those who are hungry for God's righteousness, in their own lives and for the world around them, He fills with good things. The rich He sends away empty.
- The poor in Spirit are blessed. Those who realise that they lack repentance and faith- the truly broken ones, those who mourn because their lives are in shatters, those are the ones, who are blessed by His Coming. They, the sore in soul, those who face problems seeming like Mt Everest in front of them, the weak ones are exalted and consequently *their souls begin to magnify the Lord!*
- *"Let it be to me according to Your Word"*. They receive what God promises and therefore they rejoice and produce the hymns of the Holy Spirit. They do this using the hymns of the past!
- Dear members of Christ, this is good news for the humble ones, for the lowly ones, for those trodden down by society, for those ridiculed, for those not even noticed by society, God sees you. As you are baptised in His name, you are God's child. He knows you. He exalts you.
- Jesus was conceived for you. He went the lowly road, so that your future is certain in the Israel of God. He helps His servant Israel as he has promised our father Abraham. It is clear, those who are joyful about Christ's conception and

birth are the true Israel. John the Baptist's leap of joy, while in his mother's womb, summarises the joy of all OT prophets, that finally the Christ has been conceived!

- As the letter to the Hebrews says it, God has given a body. A body is real and alive. He has provided the body of Jesus Christ, to fulfil the ultimate sacrifice, so that you and I, the lowly in the world, can be sanctified by the fruit of His birth, ministry and death. All prophets longed to see this day of Jesus' birth. That is why the same Holy Spirit of the prophets caused John the Baptist to leap in joy as he heard the voice of Jesus' mother! The OT prophets rejoice about the conception and birth of the NT redeemer!

- This Body was on its way. The Body who would hear and fulfil God's innermost desire: To rescue lowly Israel!

- Since Baptism you belong to God's nation, God's Israel. He has conceived His Spirit in you. You are not of lowly birth any more! You have become a member of the royal priesthood of all believers! We might not have much to say in the higher political circles of this world. Our direct influence might be minimal, but we may pray to the Most High Father of heaven and earth, through His Son and in His Spirit. He promised to listen to us, to us lowly ones. And thus, suddenly we find ourselves exalted, suddenly we have an ear that will listen and do things for us! Suddenly our future lightens up in the midst of terror and crazy presidents on earth- remember they have always been around.

- But God is not crazy, He does the impossible, He lets us focus on His story, and from His story we receive hope, even joy in the conception of Jesus Christ, in the womb of Mary, by the Power of the Most High.

- So, with Mary we sing, *"My soul rejoices, my spirit voices, sing the greatness of the Lord!"* **Amen.**

- *"Grace be with all of you!"* **Amen.**

[<sup>ESV</sup> Heb 13:25]