

Advent 4 December 19 2021

Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

The author of the Gospel of Luke uses Mary's song, called the Magnificat from the Latin for magnify, to lay out very clearly what God in Jesus has come to do. Jesus is Lord, the one who looks with favor on the lowly.

The child who Mary carries is the one who will scatter the proud. who will bring down the powerful from their thrones and lift up the lowly. Who will fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty.

Jesus has come not to be cute and adorable in the manger, but to overturn the structure of the world. In this, he is indeed a rebel, a danger to all who are in power. This is the one who Herod trembles at hearing of his birth. And rightfully so.

Martin Luther, in a letter to young Duke John Frederick on the Magnificat wrote that the God who created the universe out of nothing is at it again in this song. God thinks differently than we as humans do. God does not turn away from all that is weak and lowly, turning aside from poverty and misery. Rather, God has looked into the depths of human poverty, despair, misery and anguish- has reached into those depths and "helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken and those who are naught". This God has done so through one who is lowly. Mary.

It is so familiar to us that we forget. Mary is not the daughter of a Fortune 500 CEO, she is the maid who cleans the hotel rooms. She is the waitress at the small

diner. She is one of the millions, billions, of people who live their lives and dies without leaving any visible sign on the grand global history of the world.

Except. We worship a God who creates meaning out of what seems to be nothing. Who reaches into the lives of even the most common of people and gives them a mission that makes an impact on the world.

For Mary, it is a world changing impact. A world shaping impact.

In her child Jesus, we have the physical embodiment of God's ongoing desire that the weak and lowly have what they need. That they be treated with care and dignity. That they be acknowledged as having worth and importance in the world. God does this by turning the structure we have created as humans upside down.

Those who have much- are sent away empty. The powerful- thrown out of power. The influential- can't move the needle. Instead, it is the poor, the powerless, the weak, the inconsequential who God lifts up. And it is these same ones who are truly humble who acknowledge that this is not of their own doing, but through God's own blessing. These are indeed in right relationship with God, knowing their place in things.

The birth of the child of Mary will be heralded by the heavenly host of angels- but it is not announced to King Herod, or Emperor Augustus, to Governor Reynolds or President Biden, or to the rich and famous. Rather, it is announced to the lowliest, smelly, disreputable - shepherds. These are the first to hear the good news and to see with their own eyes this child. Ones who are living without even a roof over their heads.

And this is just the beginning.

As we travel this week with Mary and Joseph to the manger in Bethlehem, as we journey through the Gospel of Luke this church season, let us always remember that this child who is born has come to bring light into the darkness and to turn the world and our human expectations about how it should work upside down.

Let us ponder that perhaps we are the powerful, the rich, the privileged that are to have our lives and our expectations turned upside down.

Let us remember, that whether we are being laid low or lifted up from the depths, this child has come so that we all might have life- fuller and more abundant. That Jesus has come not to condemn the world, but to save it. That Jesus has come because God so loves us and loves this world God has created.

May the Holy Spirit blow in and through us this Advent and Christmas Season, that we might sing with joy the Magnificat of Mary and await the turning of the world.