

Luke 1:46b-55

And Mary said,

‘My soul **magnifies** the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked **with favour on the lowliness** of his servant.

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

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his 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 for ever.’

Sermon

In normal years, we read this scripture earlier in the Advent season. Mary’s rejoicing at the goodness of God reminds us of the Joy that we have in Christ. It almost seems out of place on Christmas Eve, because Jesus doesn’t even appear in the text. But, the more time I read it, the more it seemed to fit. Because, though he doesn’t speak, we don’t see him, he is already growing within Mary’s womb. He hasn’t even been born, and we see that he is already changing

people's lives. Mary can feel the light growing within her and she begins to proclaim this as Good News for all to hear.

- And this scripture from Luke's gospel just seems so perfect for this year - because I think the reality of this Christmas is that there might be moments where it is hard to see that Jesus is already here amongst us.
 - There might be a moment when it really settles in that you're home by yourself when you would rather be surrounded by family
 - Or when we watch a video of a worship service, rather than lighting candles with our church
 - Or when the difficulty of this last year hits us, and we wonder how we will ever mourn the lives of so many who have died in this pandemic and so much that has been lost
 - We may look around and feel like Christ has not yet been born.
 - It might feel like we're stuck in that time of Advent waiting. Waiting for something better
 - And it may seem like the darkness might just overcome us.
 - But Mary reminds us:
 - The good news of this Christmas, that even when we can't see Jesus, he is already working, to change our lives. Even when the darkness feels like it's closing in from every side, there is a light growing inside each one of us. And our work is to respond as Mary did - to magnify that light. To hold up the magnifying glass to that little spark, so that all can see it growing. To nurture and feed the flame until it grows into a great big bonfire of God's grace, that can warm us against the coldest of nights. For the good news, that still might feel like a whisper in a great big room, is that the darkness will never extinguish Christ's light. It can't and it won't, but the light will shine forever and ever.

And so when we ask, "Mary, Did You Know?" It's a good question. Because we do all have times in our lives where we don't know for sure that there is a Savior amongst us, where we wonder if this little child will really grow in to the one the world needs. But the answer of the scriptures is just so clearly, "Yes! Mary did know." In the midst of all our uncertainty, there is someone who has no doubt. Mary knew it all! For though the child had not yet been born, she carried him inside her and she felt him in all that she was and all that she did. She knew that she could bear him to the world.

- Even before the birth, Mary began to proclaim her praise and love for him, and she rejoiced for all that he would be. And if we look within ourselves, we will find that Christ is in us too and that we too have good news to proclaim.
- Like Mary, we have already received our Christmas gifts, even before Christmas comes, even before the presents arrived under the tree. For we know the salvation that is coming through that child. And that good news gives us life!
- And like Mary, we too can deliver Christ's love into the world. For the Lord is within us, in the form of hope, peace, joy, and love.
 - And he comes into the world again every time we lift up a song of praise to God, like Mary does.

- Christ enters the world anew every time we insist upon the truth, that the world can be better than we've seen.
- Every time that we follow in the footsteps of that child. When we look with favor upon the humble, or lift up the lowly, or feed the hungry. Christ is born again.
- And every time we commit to serve Christ and Christ alone, When we scatter the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, or send the rich away empty, or bring the powerful down from their thrones - we reaffirm that it is only Christ who reigns and we help all the world see that He is born to rule, in the fullness of love, from the very throne of God.

So, when you feel the darkness of this world around you.

- When you look around and wonder if Christ is even in our story
 - Remember that Christ is already at work within you, just as he was with Mary.
 -
 - And that when you dedicate your life, like Mary did, to **Magnify the Lord**, with acts of justice, charity, and love - then you will be lighting the flame of Christ's candle once again. And seeing what He has done for you, more and more will come to know to adore the Child who is born to us tonight - the one who is Emmanuel - God with us, before we even know.
 - By feeding that flame until all can feel the warmth of God's love. Then Christ will come into your world Until all will come to adore the child that is born to us tonight - who is Emmanuel - the God who is with us before we even know. Amen

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