

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his love endures forever. Amen.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

⁴⁶ And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." **This is the Gospel of our Lord.**

Dear Friends,

I'm amazed at all the ways people have to communicate these days. You can send a letter but for most people that is too slow or takes too much work. You can call and that used to be the preferred way of communication, but now people text or twitter or message through Facebook. It's not too hard to get the word out these days. But it hasn't always been that way. At the time of Mary and Elizabeth, communication seemed a lot slower, but in some ways it was even more amazing than all the possibilities we have today.

As we consider this portion of scripture from the Gospel of St. Luke it is apparent that the Savior was about to come into this world and God gets the message out in some unusual ways. First, we have, "**An unborn infant leaping for joy.**" Then "**A woman recognizes and acknowledges the mother of God's Son,**" and finally, "**A lowly virgin praises her Savior-God.**" All these are different ways in which, "**God's mighty acts proclaim the coming of his Son.**"

I. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Isn't it normal for babies to move around in their mother's womb? What makes John's "leap" so unusual? It happened when he heard Mary's voice. We are told Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit but I would have to imagine that baby John was also filled with the Spirit. After all, Zechariah had been told by the angel Gabriel, "**He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth**" (Luke 1:15). And Elizabeth tells Mary, "**As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.**" So this must have been more than your normal movement in the womb.

It would be easy to pass over this event as insignificant, but the excitement is building already from the birth announcement of John the Baptist and the birth announcement of the

Savior. Mary was so excited she had to rush off to see her relative, Elizabeth. God's mighty acts are not only seen in the baby leaping in the womb but also in the miracle of Elizabeth's conception of John. This is a special child that Elizabeth will bear. Even in the womb, John's leap for joy, recognizes the mother of Jesus – the mother of the Savior who will soon enter this world. But God does not leave this news of the Savior's birth hidden with Mary.

II. The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth and she tells Mary, **“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”** Mary is highly blessed among women because God has chosen her to be the mother of his Son. The Holy Spirit gave this knowledge to Elizabeth and she encourages Mary as she points out what a great blessing this is for her. Elizabeth is also thrilled that Mary would come and spend time with her as they both await the birth of their special children.

But Elizabeth also commends Mary for her faith. Mary believed God's messenger and she recognized these events as the fulfillment of God promises. The promise made to Adam and Eve to send a Savior. The promise made to Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed because the Savior would be born to one of his descendants. The promise given through the prophet Isaiah and repeated to Joseph, Mary's husband, in a dream that the Savior would be born to a virgin and he would be given the name Immanuel – which means, **“God with us.”** (Isaiah. 7:14). Mary's condition could have easily caused her to despair, but her faith in God and his promises moved her to trust God completely.

We have to marvel at the mighty act of God the Holy Spirit as he filled Elizabeth with the amazing news about Mary and continued the process of announcing the coming of God's Son. After hearing the words of Elizabeth, Mary praises God.

III. She doesn't remain speechless but gives all glory to God, **“My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.”** God has chosen this humble virgin and she rejoices. She acknowledges that generations will call her blessed because of what God has done for her. But Mary doesn't want to be worshiped or adored – it is God's name that is holy, not hers. And God extends his mercy to those who fear (honor and trust) him. Not just at this time but from generation to generation. Christ came into the world for all people of all time.

Why should we honor God? Mary tells us. **“He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.”** Could she be referring to how God scattered his people as they tried to build the Tower of Babel. They were proud and thought they could do anything. This Old Testament story certainly fits with what Mary is saying.

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” The story of Moses leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt comes to mind as God destroyed Pharaoh and installed Moses as the leader of his people. **“He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.”** A general statement of how God comes to the humble and the rich often reject the simplicity of God's love. **“He has helped his servant**

Israel, remembering to be merciful⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.” Mary ends her song with a statement of God’s faithfulness to Israel in keeping his promise to send a Savior. She knows that the promise made to Abraham is soon to be fulfilled in the Son she will bear.

Sometimes we doubt the power of God, but just consider all he has done and continues to do for his people. Mary only touches on a few things but she ends with the greatest of God’s mighty acts which is the fulfillment of his promise to Israel. The special gift of sending his Son into this world to redeem us from our sins. And Jesus himself, displays the greatness of our God.

Imagine what it took for Jesus to stay on the cross and suffer for our sins knowing that he could have come down at any time. It goes beyond our understanding. We wouldn’t do that but Christ did. So if you ever doubt God’s power, remember the cross. If Jesus was willing to go to the cross for you, he certainly will help you with the rest of your problems.

Today, as we end this Advent season of preparation, remember the mighty acts of God that announced the coming of his Son. Think about “The unborn infant leaping for joy.” “Elizabeth recognizing and acknowledging Mary as the mother of God’s Son,” and finally, “This lowly virgin praising her Savior-God with the beautiful words of the Magnificat.” May these mighty acts of God remind us that we truly have been blessed and will continue to be blessed as we place our faith and trust in our God just as Mary did. Amen.