

From Generation to Generation

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Luke 1:46b-55 (26-38)

Mary rejoices that God has chosen her to be the mother of God's Son. She says that "all generations will call me blessed." Certainly all generations have. Yet we've forgotten this Biblical principle that Jesus lived and taught. The lowly are the revered ones – not the ones with corner offices at the top of the buildings. What are we teaching the generations who come after us? Can we live Mary and God's reality of lifting up the lowly and filling the hungry with good food? We can, by staying close to God Almighty.

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

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

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Grace and peace to you this day, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Often Christmas holidays include grandpa and grandma for festive gift opening and a meal. They delight in watching the younger children open toys. Inevitably stories about the 'olden days' surface. Those days when great-grandpa walked to school and then had to start the fire in the pot-bellied stove to fill the one room school with heat. Grandma tells of that amazing day with their very first TV and all its 'snow' on the screen. The children can hardly imagine a day without electronics or a thermostat on the wall.

It is good. It's good to tell the stories. We remember where we come from and who we are from generation to generation.

Mary knew about family lineage. She understood decades of family members being born and then dying. The precious cycle of life repeats itself for generations. She can hardly contain her joy, so she begins to sing!

“My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. ... You have come once more to your people Israel, remembering the promises you made to our ancestors, to Abraham. From this day all generations will call me blessed!”

“From this day all generations will call me blessed!” Why would all generations remember Mary?

Mary wasn't a high-society young lady. She wasn't of the 'in' crowd. Yet of all the young women in the world, God chose her to be the mother of Jesus Christ. God chose a lowly servant. The great reversal was continuing of God turning the expectations of the world upside down. The world says, “Out” and God says, “In.” Society says, “No” and God says, “Yes!” We say, ‘Up.’ God points, ‘down.’ Truly....it is a Gospel principle that whenever we draw a line, Jesus draws a circle.

And so Mary sings,
My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

Indeed all generations did, and continue to, call Mary the Mother of God, blessed. We join in her praise of God who chose her to give birth to Jesus. While we don't worship and pray to Mary as some of our siblings in Christ, we do revere her for who she is and what she did. She is the theotokos – the God bearer.

Yet have we forgotten her mighty testimony of which she sings so clearly? She sings of God who casts mighty down from their thrones and lifts up the lowly. God who scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. God who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty.

Down through the generations, how have we forgotten such a basic characteristic of God? That which is God always seeks out the lowly, hungry, and lost. It is the

lowly who are lifted up, not those with the corner office. If we have to guess which one we are, we aren't the lowly. Plus there are consequences if you're rich and well-fed. One mustn't abuse that power but stay close to the heart of God. This was a basic tenant of Jesus' ministry here on earth. It was supposed to get passed down through the generations. As the prophet Micah once said, "Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God."

If we're honest about it, we Christians may very well struggle with this truth each Christmas season. We purchase gifts for family and then is there some money as well for the hungry in our community? As Nadia Bolz-Weber says, "Think about the Christmas story. How did it go from what it was originally—a story of political tyranny, alienation and working-class people, with Herod, an insecure troglodyte who puts a hit out on a toddler, and the Magi, these weird pagans, to what it is today? This snow-covered, sugar-cookie, Norman-Rockwell delusion? I don't know how we got from A to B."

<https://religionandpolitics.org/2015/07/28/for-all-the-sinners-and-saints-an-interview-with-nadia-bolz-weber/>

This Christmas – in so many families – will be one in which the matriarch or patriarch is missing. Perhaps it is the daughter or cousin. They are missing because they have to work the holiday or because they contracted Covid-19 and died. What stories will their surviving relatives tell about them? What legacy did they leave? Were they God-bearers like Mary?

In all the generations come and gone, particularly during the crisis' of 2020, what has become more clear, is the alienation of many working-class people - our siblings of color. Not only that, with lost jobs, we have more hunger in this country than we've ever had. The cars are lined up at food banks everywhere. Essential workers have become expendable workers. Our siblings of color are dying of Covid more than white people due to systemic health care inconsistencies.

Hmm, hmm. What will the Marys' of the future say of this generation? What is being passed on from this generation to the next? What trauma and tragedies? We all know they are there. In rural communities lives an unspoken trauma which is a silent predator. One Native American woman named Savannah Siquah, is beginning to teach about trauma on her Crow reservation in Montana. She says she lost count of how many family members disappeared from jail time, car wrecks, drinking, or overdosing. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/breaking-the-cycle-of-childhood-trauma-in-rural-montana>

Yet there is God, yes? One young woman is fighting for her people, fighting for new life and an end to the cycle. Perhaps one day future generations will speak of Savannah for her courage to give birth to new ideas. God is surely there at work amongst the lowly who need God.

As she sings, Mary gives us a clue about how to remember God's mighty acts amongst the most lowly. She sings, "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." Ahh! God's merciful kindness comes to those who are in awe of God. Those who remain close to God's heart, allowing God room to deepen their kindness and soften their opinions, will always be close to the Marys of this world.

For we who allow God to work through us, as Mary did, help usher in a world where suffering can end. Hunger can be fed. Loneliness is shared. Blessings are told. God comes near and Christmas can still be joyful.

You, people of God right here at King of Glory, demonstrated this mere weeks ago by bringing in toys by the bag full. Dolls and games. Trucks and scooters. Brand new coats for boys and girls. Gift cards for teens to purchase their own clothes. Collectively and individually you said, "We love doing this! We don't have grandkids of our own, so we love going shopping! We want new life to come to this generation!"

If I didn't know better, I would say each of you are named, *Mary*. Imagine their joy! Imagine their excitement. Just imagine. What stories will those children tell on Christmas morning about the blessings we have given them. God will rejoice. The Mighty One has done great things for them...through us. Maybe one Christmas...years from now...one of those children will tell a story to their grandchildren. "My parents couldn't buy me any gifts. They were in jail. But someone bought me a brand-new coat, the prettiest blue I'd ever seen." Wouldn't you love to hear that story?

Today, on this fourth Sunday of Advent, we proclaim God's joy in Mary. She has been remembered for generations. May we too, be God bearers to every generation who comes after us. Amen.