

Luke 1:39-56

December 24, 2006 – 4th SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Word Gives Us Advent Glory

† filled with the Holy Spirit (vv.39-45)

† rejoicing in God my Savior (vv.46-56)

In the name of Jesus, our coming Lord, dear Christians preparing to greet the Christ of Christmas:

Without fail this time of year always sees more movies and documentaries about the Man some say never existed and scholars seem so intent on disproving. But movie makers and media moguls have noticed something. As they would say: “Jesus sells.” Whether it’s believers or seekers or heretics, everyone has something to say about Jesus and an insatiable appetite for details. Have you noticed what these documentaries have in common? They present Christianity as something new as if Jesus started a new religion that evolved like any other religion with diverse beliefs until councils like Nicaea and Chalcedon finally determined what the Christian faith would be. Pointy-headed intellectuals looking down their nose in disdain have a hard time seeing the ground beneath their feet. They only prove how true God is when He tells us that we sinful mortals are spiritually blind, deaf and dead by nature.

How could this Book of Books be written over perhaps 2,000 years with the same message from beginning to end? Christianity is not stories about one man like Mohammed alone in the desert claiming to receive the *Quran* from an angel. This is not the single Joseph Smith insisting the angel Moroni told him what to write in the *Book of Mormon*. Not angels but the Holy Spirit told the Bible writers what to set down in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. And when the Word of God came in human flesh and blood, we too find that **The Word Gives Us Advent Glory**. We find two women, the first being Elizabeth...

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The fact that Elizabeth was six-months-pregnant was an **Advent** miracle all by itself. She could see **Glory** in it for sure, I wonder if her husband was smiling yet. The old priest Zechariah still wasn’t talking. Half a year earlier his turn came to offer incense in the temple but when he came out to the waiting worshipers, he could not give the Aaronic we hear at the end of most of our services. He could not speak because he did not believe what the angel Gabriel had told him from the Lord: **“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.”** (Luke 1:13 NIV) Questioning God in unbelief is a dangerous proposition. Zechariah would have a nine-month reminder of his folly every time he opened his mouth to speak and no words could come out. For another three months he would be silent and speechless. But not his old wife.

According to some psychologists, most men have a few hundred words a day. At this point Zechariah had zero. The same psychologists tells us most women may have tens of thousands of words to speak each day. But for men and women speaking their own thoughts and now able to multiply them on talk radio, it’s amazing how little is actually said and even more amazing how much old Elizabeth could say because she was **filled with the Holy Spirit**. Her cousin, niece or relative Mary (We’re not sure exactly what *suggenhv* means here.), had also been visited by the angel Gabriel. Only Mary believed what he said. And somehow without cell phones or email cousin Elizabeth knew everything about their conversation. This was a greater miracle than Elizabeth getting pregnant when she was way past the age of childbearing. **Filled with the Holy Spirit**, Elizabeth knew what to say when her baby jumped inside.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon

as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Do you see a greater miracle here? How do you children feel if you get what you really, really want this Christmas? Can you be quiet and listen to your cousins tell you about their toys? If they get better ones, can you be happy for them? Can we men listen to tales about someone else's big buck or cutting edge electronics without getting a little jealous? Can women listen to other moms' baby stories without aching to tell their own? Elizabeth was excited about the miracle of John the Baptist inside her over aged womb. But her son was destined to be the forerunner of Mary's baby Boy. And that's why the **Holy Spirit** overflowed her heart and mouth with praise of God for Mary and the far greater Baby now growing inside the virgin's womb. It's not about Elizabeth. It's not about her baby. And we do well this Advent to repent for all the times we think it's all about us. Here is true relief from our selfishness and pride. **Filled with the Holy Spirit**, Elizabeth had it just right when she gushed with **Advent Glory** to the mother of our Lord: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!...Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"*

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We call it "Mary's Song," even though the Bible says she spoke these words. The name *Magnificat* comes from Jerome's Latin *Vulgate* where the first word, "*Magnificat...*," means "magnifies" or "glorifies," as in, "*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior....*" Nowhere does Mary claim to be sinless and holy on her own. In fact, the Bible shows why Mary claims God as her **Savior** when she misjudges twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple and must be corrected at the wedding of Cana when her Son is thirty-years-old, shining forth His **Glory** as God. Mary is grateful that she has a **Savior**, and even more that God has chosen to use her womb to give birth to the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

We do well to honor Mary as a beautiful example of Christian faith. But we can only do so if we listen to her confession of faith as she is **rejoicing in God my Savior**. Mary wanted the world to know why: *"...for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name."* Mary's only claim is that she is a "*servant*" of the Lord. And the reason she looks forward to being called "*blessed*" by all the generations that will follow is because of what "*the Mighty One has done*" for her and for all of us through her. Mary's little Boy Child is the sinless Son of God for "*holy is his name.*"

How powerfully this miracle of the Incarnation of Christ when God took on human flesh and blood dumps on all our pride of self, of human accomplishment and position. What right do I have to think the whole world revolves around me? Jesus is the only Source and Center of history – B.C. or A.D.? When I'm more afraid of what people think than what God thinks of my words and attitudes and actions, how can I be so blind and make so many excuses? When the thoughts and feelings in my heart of hearts are so cold to the needs of my neighbor and so contrary to the loving kindness and tender mercy of God, how dare I criticize His will for my life and His governance of the affairs of men and nations! How shameful for me to be overstuffed with grace and under grateful for countless gifts from my generous Creator. How can I question His promises when He remembers for centuries and keeps them forever?

Advent is a season of repentance when God wants me to look honestly at my sins and humbly bow the knee before the Holy One of God. For then only can God's light shine deep into my heart. **The Word Gives Us Advent Glory** like Mary, **Rejoicing in God**, not as someone else's, but as **my Savior**. He humbles the proud, but lifts up the lowly. He sends the rich away empty, but fills hungry hearts, souls and tummies with good things. From the days of the ancient forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Jacob) God has been "*remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever.*" This faith is nothing new, but it makes us new. **The Word Gives Us Advent Glory** as we see "*the glory of God in the face of Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV) With humble, repentant hearts, overflowing with joy, we sing the "Song of Mary" across the ages, for her Son is **my Savior**, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.