

Trinity News

Advent IV My Soul Magnifies the Lord, My Spirit Rejoices in God My Saviour

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (1:39-45, 56)

This narrative is notable for the experience of the Spirit that comes to Elizabeth before the Baptist is born. John's "leap" coincides, or so it appears, with Elizabeth's experience of the Spirit. This whole incident connects Mary and Elizabeth in a way that builds on their kinship. It also connects John and Jesus before they are born. The eventual appearance of the Baptist to announce the coming of the Messiah is one of its 'trace elements' in this encounter. Luke tends to pile things one upon the other to demonstrate that they go together as a whole.

Mary's Song of Praise (1:46-55).

There are connections between Mary's outburst of praise and Hannah's song in I Samuel 2:1-10. There are also significant differences because the material in Hannah's song is adapted to suit the situation of Mary and the prophecies about Jesus. The material in I Samuel reflects its own ethos, as we would expect. The material in 1:46-55 has a very different intent and purpose. Both are songs about the holiness of God, the downfall of the mighty and the lifting up of the poor. The notion of justice for those on the margins recurs in both songs.

The messengers of God come in very human form. The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth connected the Baptist and Jesus for the first time. We need to visualize the scene and see two Palestinian women having both a formal and an informal visit. Nothing that happened to a woman in Israel was without form or attention to roles. So there would be attendants watching to check on them. But the informal part is between them and how they relate to each other. Visualizing this scene is like visualizing anything. It takes a few moments to consider it and it takes more than a few moments to focus on it. Mary must have been focused on God and so was Elizabeth so that they could play the roles that they had to play in God's sight, though with their full consent. Elizabeth greets her as "the mother of my Lord". This shows her prophetic insights. Luke says that she was "filled with Holy Spirit", which is his way of describing someone who is conscious of God's presence. This enables her insights. She calls Mary "the mother of my Lord," the biblical expression that we are comfortable with, together with "the mother of Jesus."

Mary's response in the presence of Elizabeth is known by the word of praise in the first line of her song: "My Soul **magnifies** the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior". We call it the Magnificat. This was a woman who knew how to praise God, who was open to the Spirit of God and unafraid of the challenges it might bring in her life. What did she visualize in herself right at that moment? Did she go to bed at night visualizing beautiful things that will happen to her tomorrow? Do you wake up in the morning visualizing exciting moments to come in the day? Or are you afraid of what is to come? If you love someone and they have not yet fully realized it, can you visualize that actually happening so that you can wait with some confidence? What we visualize may not be what we get in exact replication, but what we visualize does open the door for what we really need to appear. Otherwise, why pray to the God of all gifts and the source kindness and love and beauty and strength and health? Let us rejoice in the wonders of creation and in being alive. Let us walk down the road with Mary when she eventually went home and 'listen' to her inner thoughts bearing smiles that gave strength to her steps.

Bishop Arthur Jones

CHRISTMAS 2015

December 24.

Family Service, 4:00pm

Midnight Service, 10:30pm

December 25.

Christmas Day Eucharist, 10:00am

January 1, 2016.

Holy Eucharist, 10:00am

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS:

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147; Galatians 3:23-25;4:4-7; John 1:1-18
