

**Midweek Advent 4 – 2021  
12-22-21**

**Mary's Preparations for Jesus' Birth**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our text for this evening picks up where we left off on Sunday from the Gospel reading – Luke 1:46-51. We read the first 6 verses of the Magnificat.

**“46 And Mary said:**

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,**

**47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.**

**48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;**

**For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.**

**49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me,**

**And holy is His name.**

**50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him**

**From generation to generation.**

**51 He has shown strength with His arm;**

**He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**

Tonight, we turn our attention primarily toward Mary and all that God did for her to prepare her for the birth of our Savior, Jesus. As Mary sings the Magnificat, inspired by the Holy Spirit for all Scripture is inspired by God, she turns her attention to God who is the One who has caused this mighty thing for her.

And, as Mary's heart is being prepared to fulfill her role as the mother of the Most High, she looks beyond herself, way beyond herself and looks to coming generations. For she understands that the impact of the birth of her Child was not just for a few people, but it was for all generations! She realizes that as God has prepared her heart to believe and trust in His word of Salvation, God does the same for those who fear Him. God shows His mercy to all people. And that means you and me.

Mary's Magnificat that we sing tonight 2000 years since she first sang it, is about God's love impacting our lives, our generation, our Christmas! Because God completed His plan of salvation through especially His humble servant, Mary, our lives are also now forever changed!

First, let's look again at how God prepared Mary and then how He prepares each of us.

Of course, for Mary and Joseph, there was an incredible joy of just being new parents. They were no longer a family of two, but a family of three. The Bible doesn't give us any stories of Joseph celebrating with his buddies or morning sickness or food cravings. It does, however, give us faith stories though of how both Mary, Joseph and Elizabeth received the news of Mary's extraordinary pregnancy and how they lived out their roles in service to the King of Kings.

God's angel messenger Gabriel begins the preparation of Mary's heart with his announcement to her.

**“28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”**

As unusual and surprising this was for the sudden visit of an angel to her, God's preparation of her heart begins immediately with this greeting. The Lord is with you. It doesn't matter what else comes after that greeting, whether it is good or bad news. For if the Lord is with you, you have nothing to worry about. Indeed, as we heard Paul tell us in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Rejoice because the Lord IS with you! He has a good plan always that first of all saves your soul and secondly leads you to great service of Him.

For Mary, she was saved by her faith in the Lord who was with her, and now blessed with the special honor of bearing the Son of the Most High in her womb and raising Him as her Child. Gabriel continues to explain.

**““Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”**

Again, as unusual and fantastic was God's plan that was involving her directly, God calmed her heart by telling her "Do not be afraid". So, God did the same thing to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus. Whenever, our lives take a sudden turn, either good or bad, our first reaction often is of fear. We fear the unknown. We like the normal. We like things to happen the way the always have. We don't like ripples in the pond.

But, Gabriel's message prepared her heart to not have fear by proclaiming who was going to be reigning and in control of her life and ours. The Son of the Highest who's name is Jesus, you don't even have to worry about choosing a name, will reign over the house of Jacob, the church that is – forever!

That means that He will reign over our hearts, our homes our families our Christmases forever. How will He reign? He will reign with His favor, His grace, His love! Indeed, as her betrothed, Joseph would soon tell her, the name Jesus means that He would save His people from their sins.

It still was so much to take in all at once. How can this be for a virgin like myself? Again, don't worry, God is in charge. He's prepared the conception of your Son. Listen to Gabriel's words again.

**““The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”**

God will make it possible. In fact, it must be God who conceives Jesus because He must be a sinless man. He will be the second Adam who cannot inherit man's original sin, because He was born to take on all of our sin. What is impossible for man – to save ourselves from our sin, is only possible by God. The angel Gabriel goes on to give an example of how what was impossible for Elizabeth was made possible only by God.

**“36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”**

Yes, you can go see for yourself. And, in fact, that is what Mary would do with haste.

With these words, Mary's heart is prepared to say, **“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.**”

That is the response of a heart prepared. That is the response of faith. Let it be to me according to your word. I am but the servant of the Lord. And as we hear God's word during this Advent season and always, God inspires our hearts to also say, “Let it be to me, according to your word.” Whatever you and I are going through, whatever sudden changes we face, we know that the Lord is with us. Do not fear.

Now, after Mary arrived at Elizabeth's home, God used this visit as an opportunity to strengthen the faith of both women and the baby John in Elizabeth's womb. Mary's song, her Magnificat helped Elizabeth in her preparation with its comforting words of salvation. And it does the same for us this evening.

Mary begins by giving all glory to God her Savior. And so should we also. For God has looked upon our humble sinful state and showered His underserved favor on us. So Mary says,

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”**

Her spirit is not troubled but is rejoicing and magnifying the Lord. For she knows that the baby she would deliver, would deliver her from all sin death and the devil. So, also our hearts are prepared by Mary's words to sing the same. “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Mary's story will be repeated from generation to generation to all of us again this evening to remember how God uses each of us humble servants for His glorious purposes.

**“48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”**

Who can you tell Mary's story to who is going through a hard time to remind them that the Savior was born to all people!

**“For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.”**

God who is mighty has done great things for Mary, but He also has mercy on all who fear Him, that is trust Him, from generation to generation.

The greatest thing that God has done is taken away all your sins. Yes, Mary would be told by Simeon forty days after Jesus' birth, **“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”**

We will hear Simeon's song on Sunday. Mary's soul would be pieced by a sword figuratively as she would see her Son die on the cross. But it was the only way that all generations would be saved. And that those who trust in this Child, this Christmas, have been prepared. Your souls have risen in faith. And one day your bodies will rise as Jesus' body rose from the dead. May it be unto me Lord, according to your word. Amen!