



Sermon, Sunday December 1, 2024

"Mary and Elizabeth"

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-56 ³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowly state 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; ⁵⁰indeed, his 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 imagination 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 come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." ⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Introduction: Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The gospels that record the birth of Jesus are Matthew and Luke. The Gospels of Mark and John do not tell the story of Jesus' birth, but rather talk about Jesus' public life.

There are some differences between the stories of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. In the Gospel of Matthew, an angel announces Mary's pregnancy to Joseph, her fiancé, but in the Gospel of Luke, the angel announces it directly to Mary. Additionally, in the Gospel of Matthew, there are Magi who come to worship baby Jesus, but in the Gospel of Luke, there is a story about an angel who delivers the news of the birth of baby Jesus to the shepherds. Another difference, the Gospel of Matthew tells the story of Joseph's family fleeing to Egypt with baby Jesus and the story of King Herod massacring boys under the age of two. However, today's text is the story of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth in the Gospel of Luke. In this way, the Gospel of Luke focuses its attention on the weak, women, and children. What message does the writer of the Gospel of Luke hope to convey to us through the story of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth?

Body: Meeting between Mary and Elizabeth

Elizabeth, the wife of priest Zechariah in today's text, was an old woman who had no children. Elizabeth must have suffered greatly from the fact that she could not conceive a child. However, to her surprise, she becomes pregnant.

In contrast, Mary, unlike Elizabeth, was a young woman. According to Jewish marriage customs at the time, Mary would have been about 15 or 16 years old. Mary was legally married to Joseph, but she became pregnant before moving in with him. This was enough reason for people at the time to misunderstand Mary as an immoral woman.



In today's text, Mary, who became pregnant six months later than Elizabeth, visits the countryside where her relative Elizabeth is. However, today's text, Luke 1:41-42, describes Mary's visit to Elizabeth as follows: **“When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry”**

This passage shows that biblical writers used literary techniques just as we use metaphor and exaggeration when writing poetry. Additionally, this passage clearly describes that Elizabeth was so happy about Mary's visit that the baby in her womb showed a response, and that Elizabeth experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of life, through Mary's visit. Elizabeth, who was pregnant in her old body, was possessed by the spirit of life and welcomed a young woman who was pregnant like her.

Elizabeth goes on to confess in verse 43 of today's text, **“And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?”** This verse means that the baby conceived in Mary was the Messiah who saved humanity. The significance of this confession in today's text is that it is not limited to Elizabeth alone, but to the entire early Christian community. In other words, this confession means that Jesus was conceived in the body of Mary and came as the Messiah to save the world. The writer of the Gospel of Luke declared this fact to the world through the mouth of Elizabeth.

The writer of the Gospel of Luke responds to Elizabeth's confession of faith that the One conceived through Mary's body is the Lord through the following text, **‘Mary's Song’**.

‘Mary's Song’ in today's text is the early Christian community's confession of their faith in Christ through the mouth of Mary. Key verses of this praise describe what the Lord will do after being conceived in Mary. Verses 51-53 of the text say as follows: **“He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.”**

However, in this verse, has the confession that the Lord brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly come true in our lives? What is your answer?

To answer this, we must be able to look at the nature of life in some detail. The power and pride we see before our eyes may seem very strong, but if we look at its core, it is not so. Why is that so? The proud and powerful focus all their attention on themselves. Therefore, they completely humble themselves, they cannot become completely empty. However, the Bible says that people cannot find true peace and satisfaction in this way.

In contrast, insignificant people can rely more on the Lord because they have nothing to boast about. If these people completely humble themselves and empty themselves, they can better understand what it means to have the peace and life of the Lord fill our lives.

Christians are not people who want worldly power, but people who want the peace of the Lord. In today's text, Mary's praise for **‘He has brought down the power from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.’** means that the Lord judges and rules the world in a different way from this world.

We discover in the life of Jesus Christ how God rules and judges the world. Jesus' death on the cross was the most shameful event. No one in this world has descended to a lower or more shameful position than Jesus.

However, God elevated Jesus from the lowest position. The resurrection of Jesus was an event in which he was exalted from the lowest position to the highest position. Jesus Christ, whom we believe in, is the salvation event itself of God, who judges the world in a different way.

We can become one with the cross and resurrection of Jesus when we completely humble ourselves and experience the peace that God allows, rather than in a position of power and pride.



Conclusion: God's Salvation History

Today is the first week of Advent. We shared 'Mary's Song', which are the foundation of the Christian community's faith. However, the early Christian community had this praise sung through the mouth of the young woman Mary. The meeting of an old woman and a young woman, who were both considered insignificant in the world at the time, led the early Christian community to make this amazing confession.

God's work of salvation does not occur through those who have power, honor, or strength. God's work of salvation takes place in our lives through those who, although humble and insignificant, obey the Lord's will and hope to experience life and peace through the Lord. I hope that our lives can create and experience this amazing work of salvation of God.

