

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 21, 2014
4th Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 2:2-5; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29
Hymns: 68; 59; 62; 95:7

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 1:46-55

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.
52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.
54 He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Magnification

It means we make something bigger for us to see it better, so that we can take a closer look at something than we can with the naked eye. Of course in our text magnifying is actually talking about praising the Lord, and acknowledging the Lord's role in all that was going on in Mary's life. However, I think it is more than appropriate for us to use a sanctified double intender. When we praise the Lord we make the Lord bigger in our eyes, and hopefully in the eyes of those around us. We expand the picture to look at the details of what the Lord has done for and in us, to secure our salvation. We will exuberantly declare with Mary, "**Holy is His name!**" Indeed, we do find that --

THEME: Mary Leads Us to Magnify the Lord:

These wonderful words of Mary were spoken in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. Elizabeth was Mary's relative, and when the angel Gabriel had told Mary of Elizabeth's good news Mary had gone to be with Elizabeth, and share the joy they had in their hearts. It was not only the joy of having a baby, but the spiritual joy of knowing that the promises of God were being fulfilled in their lifetimes, and including them so personally in that fulfillment. Elizabeth was excited to see her young cousin Mary and had expressed her joy and the honor she felt in having the mother of her Lord come to her home. The words of our text are Mary's response to Elizabeth expression of faith. Mary confesses the blessed state of grace that had come upon her, indeed people in all the centuries since have called Mary blessed.

Mary's words magnify the Lord --

I. For Personal Grace.

Luke 1:46-49 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.

The first lesson of faith that is evident in Mary is her humility. While Elizabeth had pointed out exactly how wonderful it was for her to have the mother of her Lord come to visit her, Mary did not respond with any sort of self-aggrandizement that the noble and the mighty and the rich and of this world slip into so easily. We set athletes and movie stars and politicians on such a high pedestal that it often feeds their pride so they quickly buy in to all the praise as if they were anything of themselves. Mary was far more special in the scheme of world history than any movie star or athlete or even head of state, and yet she didn't respond to Elizabeth's words in any condescending manner, but rather glorified God. She magnified the Lord! She acknowledged that it was the Lord who had blessed her, and the highest blessing was the fact that the Lord was her God and her Savior.

Mary viewed her lowliness not in regard to her social state, that she was not important enough in society to have such an honor as the Lord had bestowed upon her, but with regard to her spiritual state. She knew that she was a sinner who needed a Savior, and the Lord was sending that Savior into the world to be her Savior, Mary's Savior. For this grace she exalts the Lord. She holds Him up to praise the greatness and the glory of God.

And then she proceeds to address the extraordinary events that were coming upon her in her life. Again she emphasizes the lowly state of her life. She didn't regard herself as someone of exemplary quality, and remark that the Lord surely made the right choice when He saw her finer qualities that make her better than others in the world. No, it was the Lord who raised her up from her humble place in this world. It was the Lord who had done great things for her so that others would call her blessed, so that we continue to regard Mary as blessed by the Lord.

What is evident in Mary is the work of the Holy Spirit granting her the gift of a sure and yet humble faith. Even in this Mary would magnify the Lord, and see His greatness for He who is holy has done great things for her, the fallen sinner. Mary appreciated so highly the personal grace that had come to her from heaven above.

May we take this lesson to heart for ourselves. No, none of us have been chosen to play such a central role in the history of the world

as did Mary, but each of us has been touched by God in a very personal way, touched with His grace and blessing. Yes, hasn't most everyone at some time in their lives wished to be rich and famous and influential in this world, but what does that get you in the end? Pride? Perhaps a sense of self-sufficiency? Then one magnifies oneself? And what does the Lord say? What did we read in our epistle lesson this morning?

1 Corinthians 1:26,27,29 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen ... the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ... 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

In His grace God called **us** to be His own, and holy is His name. If we consider our station in life we will see that while we are not much in the eyes of the world we are indeed very special in the eyes of God. If we are poor and lowly and despised as insignificant by the world, know that is part of God's grace in our lives for He has exalted us to be children of God and heirs of everlasting life. We exalt the Lord for the personal grace and favor which He has brought to us in our lives. And then He has given us purpose and calling in life that we should be His messengers of His grace in Christ to the world. For it is not only a few that God would save. In our text we see how Mary magnified the Lord --

II. For Exalting Grace.

Luke 1:50-53 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. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

God works in this world for the salvation of those whom He has chosen in His grace to be partakers of citizenship in His heavenly kingdom. This has been in place since the world began, and it continues to our day, and then on to the end of the world. From generation to generation the Lord has had mercy on those who fear Him. Those who see and know the greatness of His glory, those

that marvel at the wonders which God has done both in His creation and for the salvation of mankind, those who exalt the Lord and know His holiness and magnify the Lord as God before the world, to those, His people, God has come in mercy and grace. And yes, they are the simple, and those who are often looked down upon, and disdained as foolish and weak and even regarded as ignorant by the world.

These are the ones to whom God has revealed the strength of His arm. That is a very special concept. In the Scriptures it is expressed time and again that the strength of God's right arm has gotten Him the victory. The strength of God's arm is Christ our Savior who was born into the world. It is through the righteousness of Jesus that the enemy has been defeated and that the proud of this world, those who are so sure of the greatness of their works, of their righteousness, of their wisdom, are put in their place. For them Jesus is that rock of offense and a stumbling stone. But God has made Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, the one born in deep humility, to be the Chief Cornerstone, the Rock of our salvation. He has filled us who hunger and thirst for righteousness with that righteousness of God presented to the world in Christ Jesus. He has exalted us who were lowly so that we are members of the household of God.

There is no way that we deserve the Lord's kindness, for we all have sinned, indeed to our shame we all continue to sin, sins in thought, in deed, and in word. We sin so often and in so many ways that we cannot possibly even know all our own sin, or the full extent of our guilt before the Lord. And yet God loved us, and has had mercy upon us so that "while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God touched us with His grace in calling us to faith. How blessed we are to be the recipients of such grace. It is our lowly estate that God considers the lowly estate in which He placed us that He might have mercy upon us and save us. This was all according to God's plan, according to His Word of promise. With Mary we magnify the Lord --

III. For His faithfulness with His People.

Luke 1:54-55 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

The faithful, those like Zacharias and Elizabeth, and Mary and Joseph, and Simeon and Anna, the faithful were watching for the coming of the Lord. They were watching for the fulfillment of the promises of God. They knew very well what the Lord had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob concerning their Seed, and how He would be a blessing to all people. They knew what God had told the prophets to write concerning the Messiah that was to come, and they watched, for they knew the faithfulness of God would bring all these things to pass. He would remember His mercy toward His people Israel, and would bring their destiny, their high calling into fulfillment. The Savior of the world would be born as one of their people and would live among them, and be their Lord and King.

By the grace of God we also have been included in the number of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. The mercy and grace of God has come to His people. He continues to visit us with His grace and mercy. He protects us from the ravages of the enemy who would seek to scatter the sheep, and steal the truth of the gospel. But we are safe in the Lord hands. We also know His faithfulness. We know that Jesus’ promise to be with us always even to the end of the age stands firm and solid. He gathers us together and keeps us in true faith. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Lord and His Church.

So let us also join with Mary to magnify the Lord! Let us praise the Lord before the world, and speak to others of the wonders of His grace. He saved us by coming into this world to be born of a virgin. He considered our lowly estate, and had mercy upon us. He chose us out of this world to be His own special people, citizens of His kingdom, heirs of everlasting life, not because of anything that we are or have done, but simply of His exalting grace. And as He has gathered His people. So He also continues to be faithful in keeping us as His own unto eternal life. The Lord has done it all, and He has done it marvelously. **Let us magnify the Lord!** “Holy is His name!”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.