

Luke 1:26-45

A reading from the 1st chapter of Luke beginning at the twenty sixth verse.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will

conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

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

³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

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 lowliness 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. ⁵⁰His 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 thoughts 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 helped his servant 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. 539

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

This morning, the 4th Sunday in Advent we take time to get reacquainted with the young peasant girl Mary whom God chose to be the mother of Jesus, God's one and only Son and our Lord and Savior.

And it is in today's gospel that we get a glimpse of who Mary was and how she responded to the news, and how Mary expressed the joy in her heart and the beauty of her spirit in the song of praise that she offers when she visits her cousin Elizabeth.

In the first chapter of Luke, God sends his angel Gabriel to the lowly peasant girl to announce that she

had been chosen by God to give birth to a very special baby. And we hear in Mary's initial response hesitation and confusion.

She responds to this news with words that certainly many of us might use. How can this be? How can this be that this young girl is having a baby, for she is still a virgin.

How can this be that this young girl, who is a nobody with regard to religious and cultural norms is going to give birth and raise this holy child.

We might even be thinking, she is so young shouldn't God have chosen a more mature woman. She is so poor, how will she be able to provide the best that there is for this little one. She is so unworldly, how will she be able to prepare this child to be a future king.

There are so many questions about God's choice of this young girl Mary, which should remind us once again that the ways of God are mysterious and not the ways of the world. The ways of God are beyond our ability to explain or understand and the ways of God continue to present us with more questions than they do answers

But, what is it about Mary that makes her the one whom God chose to bear and to raise God's son? Isn't she just like us? Didn't she initially

respond like any one of us would with words of doubt? How can this be? She might have even wondered if Gabriel was talking with the wrong girl.

But as God continued to speak to her through the angel Gabriel, she seemed to let down her defenses and be able to listen and hear and maybe even comprehend what Gabriel was telling her.

And being a faithful Jew, she may have been reminded that as with many of the stories of scripture where God acted in ways that are unexpected and surprising that God worked through, with and in those, who the world would have considered to be the least prepared and therefore the least likely to be chosen

And then Gabriel tells her the good news about her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth, who had thought to be barren was now pregnant and if her sixth month. This message reminding Mary that nothing is impossible with God.

And in response to the message from Gabriel Mary responds, Here I am Lord your servant, let it be with me according to your word.

And although that part of the story gives us a glimpse of who Mary is, I feel that if we stop the story of Mary there we miss out on the true beauty and joy that Mary brings to the work that God is about to accomplish through her.

For shortly after Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel, Mary travels to visit with her cousin

Elizabeth. And the gospel writer Luke tells us that when Elizabeth hears Mary's voice, the baby she is carrying, who we know is John the Baptist, leaped for joy within her womb And Elizabeth says to Mary, blessed are you who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to you by the Lord.

And Mary responds to Elizabeth's words of blessing with the words of this beautiful song referred to as Mary's song. Words that reveal the joy that Mary is experiencing, the steadfastness of her faith, and the depth of her trust in God.

Listen carefully and reflect on these words of Mary:

*My soul magnifies the
Lord and my Spirit
rejoices in God my
Savior.*

*For he has looked with
favor on the lowliness of
his servant*

*Surely from now on - all
generations will call me
blessed, for the mighty
one has done great
things for me, and holy
is his name.*

*His mercy is for those
who fear him from
generation to generation.*

*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 up
the lowly*

*He has filled the hungry
with good things and
sent the rich away empty*

*He has helped his
servant Israel, in
remembrance of his
mercy according to the
promise he made to our
ancestors, to Abraham
and his descendants
forever.*

What beautiful and prophetic words spoken by this young innocent one, who now carries in her womb, baby Jesus.

And it is with the words of this song, that we hear that God has not chosen just **any** poor Jewish girl to give birth to God's son.

But, God has chosen a girl with a deep and unwavering faith, a girl that trusts that God is gracious and merciful, a girl that is confident that God can and will keep God 's promise.

God has chosen Mary, this girl with a beautiful spirit that soars high like an eagle's. God has chosen Mary, this girl with a heart so full of the love of God that it spills out as she speaks. Mary, who was not only open to doing the will of God, but the one who accepted God's call with joy that abounded, with love that overflowed, and with confidence that God would always be with her every step of the way.

So today, as we get reacquainted with Mary once again this year, let us not only hear the yes that she

offered in response to the message from the angel Gabriel, but let us feel her joy, her excitement and her passion through the words of her song,

And then let us on this day celebrate with joy and thanksgiving the young peasant girl Mary, the one with the most beautiful, joyful and uplifting spirit, the one with the unwavering faith and passionate love of God, whom God hand-picked to be the mother of Jesus.

For blessed is she, the mother of Jesus, whose "yes" changed everything for everyone for always.

AMEN

Blessing

May the quiet fire of God's love
Arise in you.

May its flame of joy and peace
Enlighten your steps in the world
And may you be like the burning bush,
The presence of God for each other.

That holy healing light of love,
The breath of God made manifest
In you.

AMEN