

## Advent 4- Magnificat- Luke 1:39-45

- Whenever you receive big news, good or bad.. What is the first thing you want to do?
- Run and tell someone... and you start scrolling through your friends or family and who you should call first!
- You need to vent, scream, cry, shriek, laugh, with someone else, so you call, or facetime, or even stop over at their house...
- So you don't have to experience "fill in emotion here" alone.
- Mary is no different.
- The angel Gabriel leaves, and Mary runs. "With haste,".
- We are told, a newly pregnant teenager makes for the hills,
- not slowing down until she reaches the home of Elizabeth, her also-pregnant cousin.
- When Elizabeth welcomes her, she bursts into song!
- I *love* this Gospel story.
- I love it because it's one of the rare narratives in the Bible that is female-centered.
- But also because its setting is domestic, intimate, and earthy.
- It gives elements I can relate to.
- This story helps us to see ourselves – of what we, the Church, might be at our very best.
- May I offer 3 ways in which we see God at work then, and now.
- **First, The gift of community:**
- As soon as Mary says "yes" to Gabriel's astonishing request, she goes "in haste" to see Elizabeth.

- She doesn't isolate herself.
- She doesn't keep God's revelation a secret.
- She doesn't attempt to go it alone.
- Instead, she seeks out a fellow-traveler.
- Although Luke doesn't elaborate on Mary's reasons for visiting Elizabeth,
- it's easy to imagine why a girl with a story as crazy-sounding as hers might make such an urgent journey.
- Tradition tells us that Mary is only thirteen or fourteen years old when the angel Gabriel appears to her. In her cultural and religious context, it places her at risk on many levels.
- She needs safety, affirmation, empathy, and companionship.
- She needs someone to recognize, nurture, deepen, and celebrate her.
- Someone who will receive, not reject.
- Love, not judge.
- Could there possibly be a better job description for the Church?
- What would it be like if we sought each other out with the trust and openness of Mary?
- What would it be like if we (like Elizabeth) received with tenderness the vulnerable people who dare to come to us, seeking refuge and nurture?
- What would it be like if our communal worship echoed the call-and-response of these two kinswomen who find themselves caught up in God's bold, risky, world-changing work, and decide to find strength in each other's company?
- Mary and Elizabeth – the young and the old, the unmarried and the married, the socially established and the socially vulnerable – finding common ground.

- As Henri Nouwen describes it, "God's most radical intervention into history was listened to and received in community."
- What a gorgeous and challenging example for us to live up to.
- **The second is the gift of blessing:**
- Part of what's so challenging about Mary's story is its brevity.
- We know from the Gospel accounts that she's perplexed and then says yes to the angel's request.
- But so much lies hidden beneath that seemingly quick and simple "yes."
- So many occasions for doubt.
- I am sure Mary had lots of questions...Joseph too I am sure.
- And yet, from these "unwritten" questions comes an outpouring of blessing:
- "Blessed are you among women," Elizabeth tells Mary,
- "and blessed is the fruit of your womb."
- In Elizabeth's mind, Mary's "favored" status has nothing to do with wealth.
- Her blessing lies solely in her willingness to trust God.
- To lean hard into God's promises and believe that they will sustain her, no matter what.
- I wonder how desperately Mary needs someone to remind her that even after the angel leaves, the light fades, and the vision recedes, God's faithfulness remains.
- My guess is, Mary carries Elizabeth's blessing in her heart for the rest of her life.
- Elizabeth recognizes that Mary's faith is precious...So she names and blesses Mary's capacity for deep trust as a gift worth cherishing.
- We don't live in a time or culture that encourages us to bless one another.
- What would it be like to cultivate spiritual attentiveness?

- To see each other, looking for glimpses of God?
- How would church be if we made a point of discerning, naming, and blessing the gifts we see in each other?
- Joy flourishes when we're willing to humbly bless each other.
- **And finally, The gift of hope:**
- At the end of our Gospel reading, she bursts into song.
- Not just any song, but a radical, hope-drenched song that soars with promise for the world's poor, brokenhearted, and oppressed.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the Magnificat this way:
- *"It is at once the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung.*
- *This is not the gentle, tender, dreamy Mary whom we sometimes see in paintings....*
- *This song has none of the sweet, nostalgic, or even playful tones of some of our Christmas carols.*
- *It is instead a hard, strong song about the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."*
- "My soul magnifies the Lord," Mary sings, and then her song goes on to do just that.
- To make more visible and clear – to *magnify* for the world – a God invested in lasting change for his creation.... A world reordered and renewed –
- Mary tells us....
- The Messiah is almost here, and the promise of his reign changes everything.
- It changes all the ways we see God at work in our communities, blessings, and hope.

- We are created to see the divine at work through us... Which then impacts how we can be blessings to others as we move in this world.
- So then...When we start viewing every human being as a child of God, we generate a renewed world, full of hope.
- Amen.