

Luke 1:46-55

Advent 4C; December 29 & 21, 2015

"A Song of Joy"

It's almost here --- Christmas. Do those words bring thoughts of panic? Do you have all your gifts purchased and wrapped? Are all your decorations up? The groceries purchased? The Christmas meal planned? It's getting down to crunch time. Or do those words bring thoughts of excitement? The doorbell rings. You open the door, and there is a delivery person standing there with a great big cardboard box addressed to you. You don't know of any deliveries that are supposed to be delivered that day. *Who's sending you a package? What is it? Do you open it? Do you wait for Christmas?* You open the box, and you can't believe what's inside the box. It is the perfect gift. It's amazing. It's incredible. You can hardly contain your joy.

For thousands of years, moms and dads had been telling their children about the amazing gift that God was going to give to this world. No doubt Mary's father had told Mary many times about the promise that God had given to Abraham. **"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** (Genesis 12:3) God had repeated that promise in many different ways to many different people. But then it stopped. For over 400 years, the mouths of God's prophets had gone silent. Perhaps, generations had begun to wonder: *Were all those promises just hype? Were all those words like the salesman who makes great promises of the product he is selling? But then after you bought it and took it home, it doesn't seem to work at all? Was he a fraud? Was God a fraud?* Nothing seemed to be happening.

But one day, an angel appeared to a young teenage girl with an incredible message: **"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. ... You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the most high."** She didn't understand everything that was about to happen. But one thing was certain – her soul was busting at the seams with joy. And so, she bursts out with a song of joy.

It wasn't going to be fun for Mary being pregnant for the next nine months. At the end of those nine months, it wasn't going to be fun wandering through Bethlehem looking for a room in which she could have a baby. It wasn't going to be fun placing your newborn baby in a feeding trough. It would take a visit from an angel to convince Joseph that Mary was part of God's master plan for the world. In some ways, none of that would matter. This was going to be the Savior of the world. This is IT. Mary's heart was filled with joy. **"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name."** How could she not burst out in song?

I think, there are many of the preparations for Christmas that take away the JOY of Christmas. Our Christmas celebration becomes part of the list of the *to-do's* of this week. But Christ's birth was part of God's *to-do* list. This was THE moment that God had planned way back in the Garden of Eden. This was why he was directing all the events of history for this moment. He brought down rulers. He performed mighty deeds with his arm. He scattered the proud. He filled the hungry. This was God's BIG moment.

What does this all mean for us? You know the story of Jesus' birth. You've heard it time and again over the years, but has that story lost its excitement? Does it fail to take your breath away anymore? Does the reality of your sin and its daily effects make preparing for the King's return on the Last Day seem like a useless exercise when you have more pressing things to deal with right now?

This week as you prepare for Jesus' coming, take a moment to step back from all the things that need to be done. Think about what is happening. God has come to this world, and has forgiven sin. He has brought you to faith to trust that promise. That Christ-child in the manger is God's incredible gift to his world. How can we not join with Mary in her song of Joy? Amen.