

12/8/2010

**THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS     The Women of Advent**

**Elizabeth**

Luke 1:39-45, 56-58

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: **(Praise) "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!** 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 **(FAITH)** As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" . . . 56 **Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months** and then returned home. 57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. **(JOY)**

**THE PRAYER** (In Unison) **Almighty God, You blessed Elizabeth with a son even in her old age. Help us to believe your promises and know that your love and gifts are always surprising. We pray in your holy name. Amen.**

**Mary**

Luke 1:26-40, 46-56

**THE PRAYER** (In Unison) **Almighty God, You chose Mary to take on the burden of bearing your son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. You also chose Mary to receive the blessings of being the mother of the Savior. Give us the same humble acceptance with which she accepted Your acting in her life. We pray in your holy name. Amen.**

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 **For nothing is impossible with God.**"

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." **(HUMILITY - FAITH)** Then the angel left her. 39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

46 And Mary said: **(FAITH)** "My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

When we traveled to Alaska 20 years ago we stayed at the home of a pastor friend in Wausau, WI. In the early 80's this pastor and his wife had shown us a picture of a sonogram. They had thought they were done having children. But, the sonogram showed the lady was expecting again, not just one but two. 6 years later these 2 hyper active young men woke us up as we stayed with our friends. Imagine, double the trouble.

This is pertinent to today's lesson. Maybe I can say this and the grown men will understand. I might get in trouble with the women. There were times when my wife was expecting and she might say something or ask for something and I would ask again about what she said and I would hear, "Watch it! You're dealing with a pregnant woman." But, think about it. In Zechariah's house for 3 months there were two pregnant women! Do you think anyone ever told him, "Watch it! You're dealing with a pregnant woman." ? After reading today's Bible verse, I honestly don't think so.

Tonight I would like to focus mainly on Elizabeth, as we consider the women of Advent, because over the years we have heard so much about Mary. So, how did this pregnant woman behave? How did she await, not only the birth of her son, but the birth of the Savior. We are told in verses 39-42 **39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: (Praise) "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!** We hear praise. That doesn't sound like someone who could be difficult to get along with.

In the next verse, verse 43 we hear humility. **43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** That doesn't sound like someone who could be difficult to live with.

In verse 58 we are told that Elizabeth's *joy* was shared with others. **58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.** Being joyful and sharing that joy doesn't sound like someone who could be difficult to live with.

In verse 56 we hear that one pregnant woman moves in with another. **56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months** That shows *love*. That doesn't sound like someone who could be difficult to live with.

But overall, there was a reason for this praise, and humility, and joy and love that was shown as Elizabeth waited. It was *faith*. She knew GOD was working. Look at verse 43 again. It points to Elizabeth's faith, **43 But why am I so favored, that *the mother of my Lord should come to me?***

Let's get me out of trouble and forget talking about pregnant women. How about you? Do you ever get . . . irritable, Worried, Rushed, or Overwhelmed during the Christmas season? Have you forgotten who is working? I know I do at times.

Or, during the year do you become difficult to deal with as you try to tackle all the tough

problems of life? Hmm? Do we forget that Jesus is God with us? And God is not just WITH us, He is working in our lives. He is working to love us, to strengthen us, to forgive us, to save us through what He did when He sent Jesus. He is working to love us, to strengthen us, to forgive us, to save us through His love today.

Last week we said, "Thank God for the Men of Advent", because their confusion and doubt showed God still working in spite of their weaknesses. This week we can say, "Thank God for the women of Advent." They give us a picture of faith at work. And faith that God is present, is what celebrating Christmas is about. Knowing God's love is what gives us joy, and love, and humility, not just at Christmas, but all year long.