

ADVENT 4  
MICAHA 5:2-5a  
HEBREWS10:5-10  
LUKE 1:39-55  
DECEMBER 22, 23, 2018

YEAR C

We have all spoken or heard the words, “It is too good to be true.” We use those words when something does not seem possible. We are also warned that if something seems too good it is probably a scam. This is true in our world but not with our Lord. Who would believe that the events told about in these readings could actually be the truth? Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, wondered about these things. He had questioned the words spoken by the angel Gabriel. He had a difficult time believing it. Because he did not believe it the angel gave a sign. The sign was that Zechariah would not speak until the child was born and then named. The child’s name would be called John. John would be the one to prepare the way of the Lord. Who would listen to a story that said two unlikely women would become pregnant and have very special children. One woman was too old to have children. The other was quite young and not yet married. In fact, she was a virgin. Virgins do not become pregnant. Joseph, the man she as engaged to could not believe it and chose to divorce her even if it was quietly. His proof came in the words of an angel that told him that Mary’s pregnancy was indeed as she said. He should not be afraid to take her as his wife.

This story is true and we can believe it. God was indeed working in the world to bring about the fulfillment of the word of God spoken through the prophets. Elizabeth was old but God works in many mysterious ways. Mary was a virgin but God works through those that are humble and will be faithful. God works in ways you and I would least expect. In the world where the Lord is king we come to expect that the Lord is doing things others would not dream of doing. You and I have come to expect that God would act in our lives to bring good things. God brings good things so that by faith we receive God’s blessings.

**Luke 1:41, 42 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.**

Gabriel the angel visited Mary. The angel visited Mary with the words concerning Mary's own pregnancy but also about her relative, Elizabeth. Mary went with haste and with great anticipation to visit Elizabeth. She was there to share in the new life that was about to come. She might have been a bit curious about how an elderly woman could become pregnant and have a child. While she was there Elizabeth and the baby in Elizabeth's womb experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. When Mary entered and called out to Elizabeth they were both filled with the Holy Spirit and Elizabeth gave her proclamation of the good news. It is also interesting that John knew Jesus while both were in the womb.

This part of the story is important for more reasons than two women wanting to support and celebrate their babies. It is about the Lord being present even before a child is actually born into the world. The Holy Spirit works in us long before we are able to recognize the spirit's presence. The Holy Spirit was active as each child was being conceived. The Holy Spirit was active working in Zechariah in the Temple when the angel appeared. The Holy Spirit was active working in Mary before Gabriel appeared announcing that Mary would bear a son whose name would be Jesus. Zechariah and Mary were each being prepared for the news that was about to come. The difference is that Zechariah was not as easily convinced as Mary.

The Holy Spirit is active working in you today. You may not yet know what God will be revealing to you today but I want you to know that the Holy Spirit is in the house today. The Holy Spirit is here touching your heart and speaking into your ear. The Holy Spirit is pointing you in a certain direction. You might say that you have nothing to offer in service to the church but if the Holy Spirit is visiting you there is much you have to offer. The Holy Spirit does not move

aimlessly among us. The Holy Spirit moves and has a goal in mind for you as individuals and for us as a congregation.

**Luke 1:43, 44    And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.**

The Holy Spirit was there with Zechariah as the angel Gabriel appeared. Zechariah did not listen to the Holy Spirit and doubted the message the angel brought to him. The Holy Spirit was speaking with Mary when the angel visited her. Because she listened to the Holy Spirit she was able to submit to the will of God as brought by Gabriel.

Mary is the mother of Jesus. She was chosen from among all other women because of her obedience and because she was humble. Mary is an important part of salvation history. God could have chosen any woman to bear the Savior of the world but God chose this young virgin. God chose Mary and Mary was faithful. She was faithful even as she went to Elizabeth.

Why has the Lord chosen you for service? God knows your heart. God has chosen you because God knows you have gifts for whatever you are chosen for. How will you respond to God's invitation to service? Will you allow the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart for the Lord? Christmas is at hand. Many of you will be gathering with family these next couple of days and you will share presents, food and memories. The Lord is with you. It is my prayer that you would invite the Lord into your celebrations of Christmas. Do not lock him out of your heart and your life. When your spirit leaps for joy because the Lord is near be sure to thank God for the love and do not be afraid to proclaim the good news of God's love. God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus our Lord and they are carried out by people like you and me. Thank God for Mary, Elizabeth, John and most of all for Jesus.  
AMEN