

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED **Luke 1:46-55****THE PRIVILEGE OF ADVENT !**

And Mary said:

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.*

*For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.
And His mercy is on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.*

*He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.
He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,*

*As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever*

Is it a privilege to face what you're facing today? To live the life you're living right now--with its stresses, and struggles, and up-hill grades? In our text, it's not hard to hear that Mary considered her role in life a privilege. Well yes, you say, she was the mother of the Savior! Yet there were problems and would be more for her, but she considered it a joy and a blessing to walk the steps that God designed for her, as part of Christ's Advent on earth and His arrival to be our Savior.

We don't know a lot about Mary. We do know she was from Nazareth in Galilee. Galilee was the northern region of the Jewish land, not the influential area of Judea and Jerusalem. We also know she was the virgin Mary. She herself had said to the Angel Gabriel ("angel," by the way, means "messenger"), "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" In her estimation, she could not have a baby because she was not intimate--sexually intimate--with any man. Yet Gabriel told her that, by a miracle of God, she would have a child. This would not make her look very honorable! An un-wed woman, young, very young perhaps, expecting a baby. "There's Mary who had to get married." Do you suppose there was some tongue-wagging in the small community of Nazareth? Yet Mary considered it a joy and a privilege to be part of the Savior's Advent.

In our text she says, *My soul magnifies the Lord.* These were not just words from her mouth, recited in habitual manner, or statements made according to social custom. They were words from deep within her heart, from her soul—from the life and life-force God had given her. She magnified the Lord. She honored Him and made Him look great--as any magnifying glass does. In perspective, she herself was small and would be even smaller. She knew she was a sinner in need of the Lord's mercy.

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. She wasn't just complimenting God or "buttering Him up" because she had some favor to ask of Him. She was praising Him and rejoicing because no matter how unbecoming her outward role was, she was rejoicing because He was her Savior. Definitely Mary was not holy, and she knew she was not holy. It was not until 1300 years later that the Latin church, or we would say the Roman Catholic church, declared Mary to be without sin. No! She rejoiced in God her Savior. She knew the child she was carrying would be the safety-net for herself included. In Him, she would not face divine wrath and anger.

For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. These words tell us a little more about Mary. She was not significant in the world's eyes, and in the eye's of the Jewish people, or just the people of Nazareth. She considered herself lowly. Was she physically attractive and "fair to look upon"? Likely not. She was just plain Mary. Was she part of the popular set among the women, or young women, of Nazareth, with suitors at her

calling? It doesn't seem so, does it? Was she a take-charge leader type person? I think not. She was just Mary. She was but God's maidservant. Serving—serving the Lord and Savior was her joy.

In spite of who or what she was not, she considered her role in God's kingdom a privilege. Who can argue with her words, *For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.* Blessed indeed to be the earthly mother and caretaker of the infant and child Jesus! Her name has not been forgotten ever since, nor do any look on her with disgust.

With different sizes and a different styles, the Lord has you walking in similar shoes. This advent as you wait to celebrate again Christ's birth, and as you wait for His arrival at the end of time, your role is your privilege. Your role in God's kingdom is not intended to be self-glorious, but to give glory to Him. He is your Savior. It doesn't matter if you are serving the Lord as a rancher, a teacher, a day worker, a care giver, a mother with children at home, a retired and slowly failing "senior," a child, etc. Your role in life is a privilege before God. You labor in a significant way in His kingdom—whether you can clearly see it or not. Just like the human body, as Paul points out to us. All cannot be the eye, or the ear. Some are fingers and toes, or fingernails and toenails, or elbows, or forehead muscles, strands of hair. Yet each has a significant role in the whole. It is your privilege to serve in your role in God's Kingdom. I remember hearing a long time ago, that a pastor's role and goal is not that the parishioners remember him twenty years later, but that they remember what he taught, that they remember the Savior to whom he led them! Just as it is a privilege to be a pastor in spite of any difficulties, so it is a privilege for you to be God's servant this very advent season with the particular burdens that this year in your life brings. *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His [maid] servant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.* We praise and bless God for every generation of Christians.

For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. Mary knew God was doing mighty and great things for her in her physical life—that she a virgin would be the mother of the Promised Seed of Adam and Eve! Indeed God can and does do anything—mighty things! Nobody can beat God at power-lifting! He also was doing great things for her in her spiritual life—that He would be merciful to her needy and sinful state! With the tax collector, Mary and you and I all pray, God have mercy on me a sinner. And what mercy God does shows. To help our helpless selves, when we have only ourselves to blame, He sent Jesus. Holy is His Name! He is not abandoning you this Advent season. In His might and in His mercy, He is with you. He loves you, forgives you, and holds you. Serve Him, not self, Satan, or society. He sent His Son for you and for us all and continues to do so in His Word until the end of time.

He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. Imagine the "arms" of God in all His might and power. Why we might say, He has arms like canons! Oppose Him and Boom! You're history. That's what he does with the proud and the worldly mighty. He scatters them, like ashes to the wind. He scattered the proud people building the Tower of Babel. They wanted to make a name for themselves. They wouldn't stop building their tower. One morning they couldn't understand each other and had to pack up and move away, each to a different direction, each to their own corner of the earth. God has scattered Satan and all evil forces who seek your harm. In Christ who Himself set you right with God by going to the cross, in Christ you the lowly sinner are lifted up and exalted and honored, held close to God's heart. Isn't it a privilege, to celebrate another Advent season! We ponder the Savior's coming to earth at Bethlehem one more time.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. Full and empty! You and I who have nothing because of sin have everything because of our Savior! You who hunger and thirst for righteousness are filled, are nourished, are strong for eternal life, because of His compassion for you, as He long ago promised and as He will faithfully fulfill to eternity. The rich? Those who consider themselves self-sufficient and despise God and His Son, they are sent away—empty. Not just hungry---one be hungry after having eaten a little. These are sent away empty! Not a happy Christmas for them. Only an outward shell of a Christmas. All very empty.

As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. God has been concerned about you since the time of Abraham and before, and will be concerned about you forever. Scripture even tells us that we were redeemed, rescued, by the precious blood of Christ *"who was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:20).* Talk about a privilege! God knew He would send His Son in love for you already before the world began, and has revealed Him specifically to you, again at this time, again this Advent Season, so that you are exalted and filled forever.! A privilege, indeed!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach ---