

Midweek Advent Vespers 3
St. Luke 1:39-56
December 19th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

There Will Be a Fulfillment of Those Things

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we approach the day of celebration of our Lord's incarnation, we are drawn ever deeper into the story of how this wonderful event took place. So far this Advent we have heard of the promise to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel. We have also heard of the promise of a Savior to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel. Now we hear from the two mothers to whom those promises would be fulfilled. When the Virgin Mary greets her kinswoman Elizabeth, the baby in her womb leaps for joy, and she proclaims the good news of the promise that was given to St. Mary. Upon these words the Virgin Mary proclaims the good news about Who she bears in her womb. The Holy Ghost abounds in today's Gospel reading.

The Holy Ghost Who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary and filled her womb with our Lord + Jesus—the Son of God—bearing our flesh. When Elizabeth is greeted by the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, who is filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, recognizes the work of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. You might say that the Holy Ghost causes St. John the Baptist to leap in his mother's womb, because the Holy Ghost recognizes His own work in the incarnation that resides in the Virgin Mary's womb. This great work is the salvation of the human race by becoming part of the human race. This Boy who would be born of the Virgin Mary, would be preached about by His cousin John, who would prepare His way by leading people to repentance and faith in the Messiah to be revealed.

The wombs of each of these women, who bear sons full of the Holy Ghost, proclaim the good news about what has happened, and what will happen. This interchange in the wombs of these two women causes them to break forth and proclaim to us that our salvation is upon us. Elizabeth proclaims to the mother of our Lord that there would be a fulfillment of the things spoken to the Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel. The Blessed Virgin goes even further in her response by proclaiming all the good things that the Lord God will do for His people in the words of the Magnificat; the canticle we sing at Vespers.

The humility and awe that each of these women display is evident in this Gospel narrative. Elizabeth is shocked that the mother of her Lord would come to her. It was already shocking to her, and humbling to her, that she was granted the gift of a son in her old age—she who had been called barren. She would have been happy with any son; with any child. But not only is she granted a child—granted a son—but she is granted a son who will play a part in the preparing the way for the Messiah.

She is granted a miraculous birth of a son who prepares the world for her Savior. And she does not act with pride, but instead humbles herself under the weight of the events taking place. She knows she is not worthy on account of her sin and unbelief, but she is granted this gift out of the mercy of the Lord.

The Blessed Virgin Mary also confesses her lowliness. She is not worthy to be the mother of the Lord—the Theotokos. Who is she to be granted the great gift of bringing forth the Savior of the world? She is nothing but a handmaiden. She is a servant girl. She is not a queen, or someone who lives in the world of the rich and powerful. And because she recognizes her place—because she is humble—she is the perfect woman to bear the Lord + Jesus.

For, the haughty—those full of pride—have no need for a Savior. They trust in their own power and status. They have the praise of mankind heaped upon them. They are continually encouraged in their faithlessness by those who prop them up as shining examples of what we should all strive to be. The prideful become their own god, and have no need of a Savior.

The Virgin Mary is not like the prideful and haughty. She needs a Savior. She even calls the Baby in her womb, “MY Savior.” She too is a sinner in need of God’s grace. She needs the benefits that the Baby in her womb will bring just as much as the next person. If she were born without sin, she would not need a Savior. If she were Immaculately Conceived as the Papists teach, she would not need a Savior, for she would not have sin from which to be redeemed. She proclaims to all that she is a lowly, humble sinner just like us. She needs a Savior, just like we need a Savior.

This Baby would fulfill all that was prophesied about in the Old Testament by the prophets of old; all the things she proclaims in the Magnificat. This is why this song of the Virgin Mary is worthy of our putting it to memory; to learn these words and sing them often. For, these words proclaim what the Lord + Jesus does for us. He will uplift all those who trust in Him alone for salvation. The unbelievers and those who have no need for a Savior will receive the reward reserved for the devil and his angels—eternal life in Hell. All those who cling to the Lord + Jesus in humble, lowly faith will receive the benefits that He comes to bring through His birth into our flesh.

This is truly a text full of rejoicing. Indeed, we are in the week of Gaudete, one of the three “rejoice” Sundays of the Church’s year. And it is the Holy Ghost’s work that causes us to rejoice. Even as it causes the unborn St. John the Baptist to leap in mother’s womb and causes both Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary to proclaim the good news about the Savior of the world Who has been conceived in the Virgin’s womb.

Make note that St. John the Baptist shows his joy at the arrival of the Messiah by leaping in Elizabeth’s womb. Besides the obvious fact that this proves that a baby is actually a baby in the womb, and not just a clump of cells; that the baby is actually alive. This baby is developed enough to leap. That is one of the truly remarkable things about this Gospel account from the Evangelist St. Luke: in the tight space of the womb a baby leaps. Besides how remarkable the physical aspects of that is, even more remarkable is the reason. This shows the sheer and utter joy of St. John the Baptist.

We should respond in the same way when we hear the Word of God. When the promises of our Lord’s salvation are proclaimed we should be filled with the same kind of joy with which St. John the Baptist is filled. When our Lord + Jesus comes to us in His blessed Sacraments and offers to the gifts of His sacrifice for us—the gifts that He comes to bring in His incarnation into our flesh—we should be filled with the same kind of joy as St. John. For, we are indeed lowly sinners in need of God’s grace.

When we recognize our lowly position; when we recognize that we are unworthy of the grace and mercy of our Savior + Jesus Christ, we remove from ourselves the temptation to think that we can do anything in ourselves to bring us redemption. When we humble ourselves and confess our sins

before God, we acknowledge that salvation is to be found outside of ourselves; we admit to ourselves that our need for a Savior is to be found only in the Lord + Jesus Christ. And then the Holy Ghost fills our hearts with faith and joy in the Incarnated Son Who is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

What great joy this is for us! It was a great joy for Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary, for they recognized their lowly estate—they recognized that they were unworthy to receive such a gift. The Lord + Jesus Christ—the creator of Heaven and Earth—chooses to be born of a woman. He chooses to be born of a servant girl. All so that He might redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. He wants to exalt us lowly sinners to be His brothers and sisters, so that with the whole family of God—all the saints who have come before us—we may leap for joy over what He has done for us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!