

Midweek Advent Vespers 3  
St. Luke 1:36-56  
December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

### The Babe Leaped in Her Womb

*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.

The angel Gabriel had announced to Zacharias that his wife, who was considered barren, would bear a son. It is now the sixth month after she has conceived, and the angel Gabriel is again sent by God to a young maiden—a virgin—in a city of Galilee called Nazareth. This young virgin is betrothed to man named Joseph who is of the house and lineage of King David. The angel Gabriel tells the Blessed Virgin Mary that she, like her relative Elizabeth, will conceive and bear a son. This Son to be born to the Virgin Mary is the Son of God, and he will be called + Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.

The Blessed Virgin Mary believes the words of the angel Gabriel, and says, “Let it be to me according to your word.” She believes because like the angel Gabriel says, “For with God nothing will be impossible.” Elizabeth, in her old age and barren state, conceived and is carrying a child now for six months. The Virgin Mary will also be overshadowed by the Holy Ghost and conceive in her womb our Blessed Savior + Jesus Christ. He is born into our flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the power of the devil. What wonderful news the angel Gabriel has for us poor, miserable sinners during this Advent season! The Lord + Jesus is coming. God is coming to His people to be born into our flesh and fulfill the Law of God for us and suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. He will give up His life for us, so that just as He was raised again on the third day, we too might enjoy newness of life.

This news is so wonderful for the Blessed Virgin Mary that she runs, with haste, to the hill country of Judea and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted her relative Elizabeth. Then a truly remarkable thing happened. The baby in the womb of Elizabeth leaped for joy. St. John the Baptist leaped for joy at the greeting of the Mother of God—the Theotokos; the God-bearer. The one who would bear the Christ speaks and St. John the Baptist in the womb of his mother—who is only six months old in the womb—leaps for joy because he recognizes the voice of she who bears the Son of God. Her voice sounding means that the Lord God is present. Her voice means that the Lord + Jesus, Who is both God and man is present with them all. The Lord + Jesus has entered the room.

The Lord + Jesus has come and St. John the Baptist can have no other reaction than to leap for joy. It says a lot when we consider the tight space of a womb. How can a baby leap in a womb? This is exactly what St. John the Baptist does in his mother Elizabeth’s womb. But as miraculous as that is even more miraculous is the recognition of St. John the Baptist that the Lord and Savior of mankind

has entered the house, and now dwells with them. St. John the Baptist is six months old. The Baby in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary has only just been conceived. His incarnation—His taking upon Himself our flesh—has just happened. St. John the Baptist recognizes that the Lord of all of Heaven and Earth, the One Who made the Heaven and the Earth, now safely dwells within the virgin womb of Mary. This is indeed cause for leaping for joy.

Our Lord God has come down from Heaven and now dwells with us in our very own flesh. He has put on the flesh of mankind. He is now, like us, under the Law. But no sin dwells within His flesh. He is pure, clean, and innocent. He will live His life on Earth in obedience to God's Law. He will do what we are unable to do—fulfill the Law of God.

The arrival of the Lord + Jesus, even though He is still in His mother's womb, and only just a few days old after His conception and incarnation, is cause for great rejoicing. His arrival not only causes St. John the Baptist to leap in Elizabeth's womb, but it also causes everyone else in the womb to be filled with the Holy Ghost and proclaim the great things that this unborn Baby will do for His people.

Elizabeth exclaims her own shock that the one carrying her Lord and Savior would come to her. Her surprise that the Lord God would consider her important enough to play a part in the arrival of the Lord + Jesus is not unlike our own surprise when we consider our sinfulness—all the horrible thoughts, words and deeds that are contrary to the will and Law of God—but that He deigns to forgive us of our sins. And He does not just say the words, "You are forgiven." He takes action. He comes down from His heavenly throne, and wins our salvation by His works and merits among us.

We are surprised to hear the words, "Your sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ" even though we are poor, miserable sinners, and have done horrible things and even though we do not desire to do so, we will continue to do horrible things in our thoughts, words and actions. So, it is no wonder that Elizabeth is just as surprised as we are that her Lord would come to her house. Her baby in her womb is filled with joy and leaps in her womb, and this in turn fills her with joy so that she proclaims with a loud voice the praise of the one carrying the Lord.

The Blessed Virgin Mary also is filled with the Holy Ghost, and proclaims the words that have become the canticle of the Office of Vespers, the words of the *Magnificat*. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." St. John the Baptist rejoices by leaping in his mother's womb. Elizabeth rejoices by proclaiming her surprise that the Lord would come to her and grant her a part in His arrival. And the Blessed Virgin Mary rejoices with her whole being, for she is bearing the Son of God. She is bearing our Savior. She is bearing her Savior—the Lord + Jesus.

Her words of rejoicing at this event—the *Magnificat*—has become the Church's words of rejoicing over our salvation found in the Lord + Jesus Christ. This is why we sing this great canticle at every Vespers. Our soul now magnifies the Lord. Our spirit now rejoices in God our Savior. Mary's words have become our words. For He has not considered the lowly state of us poor, miserable sinners. Unlike the world and our flesh which only wants to see our lowly state, and keep us in despair and shame for our misdeeds. The Lord + Jesus sees our lowly state—the lowly state of the Virgin Mary—and does not shun us as the world and our sinful flesh does. But He shows us love by ignoring all that we have ever said and done and thought, and comes to us to save us.

He comes to us to buy us back from sin, death and the power of the devil. He comes to redeem us. This is truly cause for us to rejoice. It is a cause for us to leap with joy. When we sing the *Magnificat* in just a little while, we are joining our voices to St. Mary's voice. And with her, we are joining our voices to all the saints throughout time who have rejoiced over the Lord God our Savior. Our souls truly are magnified, and our spirits are rejoicing over what our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has done for us and for all the Church. When we hear our Lord's greeting through the lips of the Blessed Virgin Mary—

when we hear our Lord's greeting through the lips of the pastor in his preaching—we like newborn babes who desire pure spiritual milk leap for joy in the womb of holy mother Church.

The Church bears us in her womb and her Bridegroom, the Lord + Jesus Christ, through His preached Word and administered Sacraments, greets us whenever we gather around His means of grace with the words and promises of what He has done for us. He has come down from Heaven. He has put on our flesh. He has fulfilled the Law of God perfectly for us. And He has suffered the punishment that we deserved on the tree of the holy cross. We poor sinners have a Redeemer from sin. This is certainly cause for leaping with joy.

Therefore, let us leap for joy whenever we come to this holy sanctuary and hear the words and promises of our Savior + Jesus Christ. For this is indeed wonderful news that makes us run with haste, like Mary, to share the wonderful news of our salvation with all those who would hear. Rejoice, highly favored ones, the Lord is with thee. He will bear you up, and bring you into His eternal home in Heaven. May the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, grant this unto us all. 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!*