

Midweek Advent Vespers 3
St. Luke 1:36-56
December 16th, 2020
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

His Mercy Is on Those Who Fear Him

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.

In the second chapter of the First Book of the Prophet Samuel the mother of the Prophet Samuel, Hannah, prays a prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of her son. This song is the Canticle for every Wednesday during the Office at Matins, throughout the year. It is known as the *Exultavit cor meum*, "My heart rejoices in the Lord." This means that every Wednesday throughout the Church's year, even though Wednesdays and Fridays are typically days of fasting through the year, that every Wednesday is a day of rejoicing in the Lord; a day to rejoice in a Savior promised and sent to us poor, miserable sinners. As we learned in Bible class, this song can be seen its parts repeated throughout Holy Scripture. Its words and phrases are certainly prevalent in King David's songs in the Psalter. Its themes are also present in the song that we will hear next Wednesday, the Song of Zacharias, commonly called the *Benedictus*, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," which is the Sunday Canticle during this season of Advent. We will hear more about that song next Wednesday on the final Midweek Advent Vespers.

Elements of the song of Hannah from the second chapter of the First Book of the Prophet Samuel can also be seen in the song that is found in our Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. The Blessed Virgin Mary's song that she sang when she greeted her relative Elizabeth. Whose greeting made the baby in the womb of Elizabeth leap for joy, and whose greeting made her cousin Elizabeth cry out with a loud voice and exclaim, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" The Blessed Virgin Mary's response echoes the song of Hannah. Her song which we sing every night during the Office at Vespers (and so we sing it tonight during our prayers at Vesper; indeed, we sing it or hear it sung three or more times tonight) this song is called the *Magnificat*, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

All of these songs embrace one clear theme: Joy over the promises of the Lord God having been fulfilled. Hannah rejoiced that the son promised to her was born. The Prophet Samuel would usher in the end of the priesthood, and the beginning of the kingly rule over all Israel. He was directly responsible for establishing King David on his throne. On account of the faithful rule of King David, a descendant was promised that would establish a never-ending Kingdom. The throne of King David would never lack a man to sit upon the throne. This man is the Lord + Jesus, our Lord and Savior from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Zacharias, who we heard about two Wednesdays ago, also sings a song of praise, which we will hear more about next Wednesday. His song of praise gave thanks for the forerunner, his son John who was born to prepare the way of the Lord + Jesus. He rejoiced not only that he had received a son in his old age, and had the reproach of his wife Elizabeth removed from among the people of Israel, but he especially rejoiced that this son would prepare the way for the Messiah, the Lord + Jesus Christ. The arrival of his son, meant the coming arrival of the Christ, the Son of God. The long-expected promised Savior was finally coming to redeem His people and win for them forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

When King David uses elements of Hannah's song in his Psalter, he too rejoices that the Lord is faithful in His promises. King David firmly believed the promises of the Lord God; that He would send to His people a Savior, Who is the Christ, the Lord. This is why we daily pray the Psalter, both morning and evening, for it embodies the voice of the Church—of us—who wait for the promises of our Lord God to be fulfilled. These promises grant us comfort and hope in this world which constantly seeks to destroy our faith and lead us into great shame and vice. This world seeks to lead us into the pride that believes our works and merits are good enough; that we are "good Christians." The Psalter daily reminds us what poor, miserable sinners we are, and how desperately we need a Savior. The Psalms lead us to the Christ, our Lord + Jesus, for the Psalms are the very voice of the Christ; they are His Words sung into our ears. We cling to these words and promises of the Christ in faith created in us by the Holy Ghost through our singing of the Psalter—the Word of God.

The same is true of the song of the Blessed Virgin Mary which hear and sing tonight. The Virgin Mary rejoices that the Lord God is her Savior. He has found favor with the Blessed Virgin, not because of anything she has done. She has certainly not known a man. She is only betrothed to her husband, Joseph. She is only a lowly handmaiden, as her song confesses. She does not live in a palace. She is not the daughter of a priest, and has no connection to the temple in Jerusalem. She is by all accounts, a nobody. She is just like us. She is a poor, miserable sinner in need of the Lord God's grace and mercy. His mercy is on all those who fear Him; on all those who cling to Him in faith.

We cling in faith to the promises of the Lord + Jesus Christ. We cling in faith to the promises proclaimed to us through Hannah, Zacharias, King David, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. For the promise is of a Savior to be born in our flesh. The Lord God will become man to redeem mankind from all their sins. Indeed, our Lord + Jesus has already been conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary when she went with haste to the hill country of Judah to enter into the home of her cousin Elizabeth. Everybody in the room recognizes the great event that is taking place at the moment. The baby in Elizabeth's womb, who is six months from conception, leaps for joy at the arrival of the Baby in the Blessed Virgin Mary's womb, Who is only a few days past being conceived. There is no greater testimony that life begins at conception.

The forerunner and the Christ are brought together through their respective mothers. The Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, the God-bearer, brings the incarnate Lord God in her womb to meet St. John the Baptist, in the womb of his mother Elizabeth. But it is not just the babies in the wombs that are rejoicing this day. For Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary both exhibit great faith. The Blessed Virgin believed the words of the angel Gabriel and said, "Let it be to me according to your word!" She believed the promise that she would bear a Son, the Savior of the world, even though she had not known a man. Elizabeth also believed and shouted out with a great cry her belief. She was filled with the Holy Ghost, Who spoke through the words of faith. Indeed, the words of her son in her womb. She believed that her son would prepare the way for the Baby in the Virgin Mary's womb—our Lord + Jesus Christ.

For He has fulfilled His promise of old that He would take upon Himself our flesh and come and dwell with us, in order that He might fulfill perfectly the Law and will of God, and that He might offer up His innocent flesh as a perfect and once and for all time sacrifice for mankind on the tree of the holy

cross.

His mercy was on the Virgin Mary, who was chosen to be the Mother of God. She feared Him, that is, she believed the promise that was promised to her. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, also feared Him, that is, they believed that the Babe in the Virgin's womb had come to redeem His people from the powers of darkness, and bring them, and all the world, in His marvelous light. His mercy was on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist. For they all feared Him and believed that the Messiah—the Christ—had finally come into the world to redeem His people Israel. Indeed, my dear friends, His mercy is on all those who fear Him; on all those who cling to Him in faith. His mercy, that he does not treat us according to how our sins deserve, is on all of us. For we cling to Him in faith, and we cling to His promises. He has promised that He would rescue us from sin, death and the power of the devil, and He has promised to bestow upon us forgiveness of our sins, lead us into eternal life, and save us from all our enemies, especially the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

Because His mercy is on all of those who fear Him—on all of us—it is right that we rejoice and give thanks and praise for what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. Wednesdays throughout the year are days of rejoicing. We rejoice in the morning during the Office at Matins when we sing the *Exultavit cor meum*, the Song of Hannah, whose song proclaims the coming of a Savior. Just as we rejoice in the Canticle which we sing every Sunday during Advent, the *Benedictus*, the Song of Zacharias. And we rejoice in the evening during the Office at Vespers, when we sing the song of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the *Magnificat*. For our Lord God in the Person of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has mercy upon all of us poor, miserable sinners. Thanks be to God! 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!