

Jesus Comes to Us From a Story

Scriptures: Luke 1:46-55

Christ Alone is Divine

Today marks the last Sunday of Advent, and so we're wrapping up our study on the human roots of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We've been thinking about the family story of Jesus. I hope in all this you've found that Jesus, God-with-us, is very much like us, in the sense that He comes from someone (a people), somewhere (a place), and something (a story). Today, on this fourth Sunday of Advent, we'll talk briefly about the family story from which Jesus comes – a story of a covenant made between the Creator of the universe and humanity, and the ultimate fulfillment of that covenant bond in the Person of "the Word made flesh." As King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and as our great High Priest, Jesus fulfills every longing of the human heart for a Savior. If you have your Bible, or a Bible app with you, turn with me to the first chapter of Luke's gospel. We'll be looking at what's known as the Magnificat – the Song – of Mary, starting at the 46th verse. **Read Luke 1:46-55.**

Before Jesus' birth, after Mary heard from the angel that she would have a Child by the Holy Spirit, and after seeing her cousin, Elizabeth, she was filled with a song of praise and worship. Her song is called "The Magnificat," it's Latin for "My soul magnifies." Our time in Advent is marked by worship – that's wild with praise, rich with memories, and packed with joy. I want to spend some time this morning looking at some of the lyrics of Mary's song with you. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior," (Luke 1:46-47).

Mary's telling herself, God, and anyone else who will listen, what's going on inside her body. She's overflowing with joy – she's rejoicing in what God has done, and what God is about to do through her. I want to tell you something about this. Mary is aware of her own need for a personal Savior. See, she says, her "spirit rejoices in God my Savior." She knows only God can save her. Sometimes I have some friends who hear that, and they get pretty bent out of shape. Mary's not a divine human – only Emmanuel, God-with-us, is. Jesus Christ is the only divine Human.

Jesus is the Relationship Restorer

Since the Garden of Eden to today, people made in His glorious image have been failing. In a godless world, people might say we've failed ourselves, failed each other, and failed the Creation itself. But ultimately, in a God-filled world, we're able to recognize, as followers of Jesus, that the first failing of humanity is in its relationship with God. That results in a domino effect for all our other failings.

And so, into our story of failure upon failure, the Covenant-Keeping God moves. Through covenant after covenant, God restores the relationship on the human side because we are incapable of doing it. In the Scriptures, over and over we see God wooing His people – lovingly pursuing His people. He made a covenant with Noah, then with Abraham, then with Moses, then with David. And in the fullness of time, God made the New Covenant – through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. God repaired – for all people who struggle with Him, and we all do at times – He repaired the relationship that only One who was both God and Human could fix.

Jesus came from something – a covenant story of His people – that reaches in its long, and elegant history from that day when the forbidden fruit was eaten, to you and me today, and to everyone else around us. That’s what Advent, and Christmas is really all about. Jesus came, He’s the Restorer of relationships – vertical between us and the Father, and horizontal between us and others. And when you visualize that, what sign do you have? You have the cross. That’s where He does it. Without the cross of Christ on Good Friday, and His Resurrection and empty tomb on Easter Sunday, Christmas is pointless.

Mary Praises God

His worst day was our best day. We call it Good Friday – it was good for us, but horrible for Him. How He loves us! So Mary, she’s singing, she probably doesn’t realize the cross is coming. But she says, “He’s been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is His name,” (verses 48-49). She knows there’s something significant God is going to do through the Babe growing inside her, and she’s not afraid to give credit to where it’s due – to God alone.

Notice what she says next. “His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation,” (verse 50). She knows that God’s plan involving her has long-term implications for others. Christmas is a story about our neighbors, co-workers, cousins, friends. It’s not about us. It’s about our fellow humans in every age, in every location. It’s the story of God reaching down through the ages, through Jesus, to you, to me, to all who recognize His unrelenting, reckless love for them – and, who say “Yes!” to receiving it as a gift! This morning we’re standing – well, maybe sitting right now – on the shoulders of the saints. Those faithful followers of Jesus Christ who through their words and deeds have drawn us to this place, at this time. I’ll say this – there is a “Yes,” that many people have yet to say to the God who loves them and knew them before they were born. That “Yes!” is what starts the change – the transformation – of the individual person. It leads us to become who He originally intended us to be, and frees us to lead others along beside us on the journey.

It's all very humbling! Mary tells us, "He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble," (verses 51-52). She understands better than a lot of us today do, that a humble heart is one that's humble in it's inmost thoughts – not just in its demeanor. "He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as He said to our fathers," (verses 53-55).

We are Part of the Story of Jesus

Mary knew the covenant story of Israel was being fulfilled in the life of her Son, Jesus. She had physical evidence of God's mercy for her people through the Incarnate One she would birth. We can, and should, see ourselves in that long, covenant story that reaches deep into the roots of the story of Israel. This is where Advent, the season of anticipation and hope that Christ will meet us once again this year, reveals Christmas.

The covenant story that finds its fulfillment in "the Word made flesh," is truly Israel's story, our story, and the story of the whole world. So friends, this season, own it. Embrace it as your story. A Way has been made for you to come into the wholeness that only the Love of God can bring into your life. If you say "Yes!" to the covenant Love that's been pursuing you your whole life, again this season – you'll be opening yourself up to meet with God in powerful new ways as this new year ahead unfolds. It will be a great adventure!

I'm going to wrap up in just a moment, but the thing I want you to take away from today is this: we are bearers of a covenant story with humanity in which God is the Loving Pursuer and Wooer of the Heart, and we are the wooed and pursued. Could we begin to take the basic message of that story, that you and I are beloved by Him enough, that He condescended Himself to come down here in a physical, human body, so we could know Him? Check out this picture (<https://a.co/d/1AOW3gy>). I have this hanging over in my office, and often look at it when I'm here by myself.

Finding Life in Jesus Christ

Jesus came, and put His skin into our game, so to speak. You know, you can – people do – take a literal view of the Bible. Sometimes that can be a good thing, and other times, that can be detrimental. See, when you read about the crucifixion, if you take it literally – what I mean is, at face value – then you could say, the Jews or the Romans killed Him. They crucified Him. I mean, that's what the Bible tells us. They did, it's a fact. But there's more to it than that. See, that guy holding the mallet and the spike – that's me. That's you. I did that. So did you. We crucified Him. He died because

of us, and for us. Despite all our shortcomings – look at that – He holds us up. Church, don't ever forget the price He paid to prove His love for you!

He came in human flesh and blood so we would know we're loved by God – that He knows our names, our needs, our real struggles, and He can give us hope. It's in Jesus that you, your family, your neighbors, your co-workers, and the whole world will find the life for which we're all looking.

Blessings to you as we move from the anticipation of Advent, into the celebration which is Christmas. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," (John 1:5).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for inviting us into a story in which You build the bridge to meet us, and to find us. This Advent and Christmas season, give us a new awareness of how big Your story really is, and the part we have yet to play in seeing many come to know You in our families, our workplaces, and our community. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.