

## **Coop's Scoops # 141 Sunday ADVENT FOUR December 20, 2020**

**Sentence:** I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to His word.

( Luke 1:38)

### **Readings:**

2 Samuel 7: 8-16    Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-24    Romans 16: 25-27



### **The Collect:**

Heavenly Father, who chose the Virgin Mary, full of grace, to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour, now fill us with your grace, that we in all things may embrace your will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### **The Holy Gospel: Luke 1: 26-45**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born<sup>[c]</sup> will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be<sup>[d]</sup> a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.

**Sermon:** This Fourth week of Advent our attention turns from John the Baptist, who told his followers to "prepare the way of the Lord" to Mary, the young **woman who herself "became" the way for the Lord.** We move from considering the difficult to contemplating the impossible. From wondering how we can "fit" ourselves into the Advent story to marveling that anyone "fit" at all. You see, it is all quite preposterous to our reasoning.

If God wished to come to earth to save us, He could just do so. Just appear, in glory, and speak the word, and everyone would instantly "get it" and serve Him. Perhaps people would serve Him from fear, or from sheer logic, or from self-serving interest...but they most certainly would serve a God who appeared to the world in absolute power and certainty. Why didn't He do it that way? I think the answer is that God sought love from His creation. Only love would do. **And love can only be begotten through love.**

God the Father loved Mary. He had knit her together in her mother's womb, just as He knits all of us together. He had observed her babyhood and toddler years and early schooling and girlhood friendships. He found her delightful. Full of energy, questions, goodness, and trust. Full of the faith of her

parents. A lovely young woman of the people of Israel. Of the house of David. The time had come. The woman was chosen. The great act of healing was about to begin. So God sent His angel Gabriel to talk to Mary.

Gabriel said three very important things to Mary:

- 1/ God loved her, and affirmed her.
- 2/ God could make her the mother of a little son
- 3/ That little son would be the son of God, not the biological son of Joseph, the man to whom Mary was engaged.

And Gabriel gave those messages to Mary in the kindest possible way. He saw her tremble, and said “Don’t be afraid for God is always with you”. He saw her confusion and reassured her that she would not need to be with any man, but rather that God Himself would start the reproductive process within her in a mysterious yet harmless way. He saw her humility and her faith, and pronounced her “blessed”. Loved of God, and a blessing to the whole world. And Gabriel, who would never announce a coerced pregnancy, must have been thrilled to hear Mary’s prayer in which she accepted all that God had planned for her, without argument or plea.

William Barclay, the great writer and Biblical expositor, has said that the most popular prayer is “Thy will be changed”, but the most perfect prayer is “Thy will be done”. Jesus prayed that way, even when He would have preferred another way. Mary prayed that way, even when she could not possibly understand all that was about to happen, all that was about to change her life forever.

I can't help but wonder how Gabriel felt when he was delivering God's message to Mary and awaiting her response. She must have seemed hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone God's child, but he'd been entrusted to give her a message and he gave it. When he told Mary not to be afraid, I wonder if Gabriel was hoping Mary wouldn't notice that he himself was trembling, knowing that the whole future of creation hung now on the response of such a very lovely, very young, very humble young girl. Did Gabriel feel a thrill of joyful relief? Did Gabriel offer praise to God? Did Gabriel offer up a silent "How right you were, Lord, to choose this daughter of Israel. How right she is to bear your Son!"? I don't know if Gabriel had those feelings, but I know that I do. I admire and respect and affirm Mary as the model of faith and humility for all women. She was just marvellous on that day so long ago.

God is the most tender and gentle of Fathers. Even on this great day, when He announced His plan to redeem the world through coming to dwell with humanity, He cared greatly for the young girl who gave herself willingly to her role in His coming. God did not have Gabriel just vanish and leave Mary standing there not knowing what to do next. God had already prepared someone to help Mary. Someone who would know intimately what Mary would soon experience. Someone who would know herself that God is indeed able to do the impossible. That someone was **Elizabeth**, wife of the priest Zechariah, herself in the sixth month of pregnancy in her old age. Her husband had also been visited by Gabriel. But Elizabeth and Zechariah didn't talk about it. Zechariah had not believed Gabriel's words, and had not spoken a verbal word since. But Mary, she could talk, and she believed, and I am sure Elizabeth and Mary rarely stopped talking over the coming months, sharing the milestones of pregnancy, hemming and

washing and hanging the swaddling clothes for their babies out in the fresh winds and sunshine. They soon rejoiced at the birth of baby John, and just months later, the birth of cousin Jesus. Elizabeth and Mary – two women of the house of David – two women of faith and humility – two women who accepted wholeheartedly the will of God – two women who raised sons they dearly loved – and two women who would mourn deeply the early deaths of their sons...yet all the while give praise and thanks and glory to God their Father. How good of God it was to place these two women together for companionship and solace during their pregnancies. Such a bond of love and joy they shared. They are the perfect illustration of women who lived up to the words “Be not Afraid”, and they did that in part by being family, and trusting family to be with them.

May God’s Holy Spirit help us to learn from Mary and from Elizabeth that God’s plans for us are also good, that He bids us also “be not afraid”, that we too find favour in His sight through Christ our Lord, that we too are called to serve Him with willing, eager, and accepting hearts. And may our response, together, always be “ Behold, we are the servants of the Lord”. Amen.

**Prayer:**

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Blessing: Be steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always !  
- Judie+