

Sermon for Mid-Week Advent #3

Date: December 18, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: 2 Samuel 6:12-23

Epistle Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-45

Sermon Text: Luke 1:39-45

Sermon Title: The Child Who Is John's Joy



Introit: Psalm 124; Antiphon: Isaiah 65:19a, 24

Hymns:

LSB 347 – Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People

LSB 377 – O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide

LSB 352 – Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord

LSB 358 – From Heaven Above to Earth I Come (v.1,3,8,15)

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship\



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Text: Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Kings don't run, they stride. Kings don't just throw something on, they are robed. Kings don't just grab a bite to eat, they dine. Kings are expected to be filled with dignity and decorum, to be of regal behavior and composure. Kings certainly do not leap.

The Old Testament Reading today has a king engaged in some not-so-regal behavior. King David is leaping. He is leaping because he is so overjoyed. One of his wives thinks this is repulsively undignified. Others are probably be shocked at King David's behavior, but he doesn't care. He is overjoyed that the ark of the covenant is coming into Jerusalem.

You have heard how the ark of the covenant was the place for God's presence, a special gold-covered box on top of which sat the Mercy Seat. David had attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem three months before, but when Uzzah was struck down for touching the ark, David was afraid and left the ark with a man named Obed-edom. Now, however, hearing that Obed-edom had been blessed by God because of the ark, David is again willing to try to bring the ark to Jerusalem. As part of the procession, David changed into a priestly garment, sacrificed before the ark, and entered into Jerusalem dancing and leaping for joy before God's presence. David's wife may not have found his behavior very fitting for a king, but God did. In fact God punished David's wife because of how she scorned David's joy that day.

Rejoice is the word that echoes through the Christmas season. This is the week we light the pink candle on the Advent wreath, the candle named "rejoice." What is the reason for this perpetual rejoicing? The Lord is at hand. That truly is a cause for rejoicing! We don't have to go up to heaven to search for the Lord and bring Him down to us. The Lord comes to us. The Lord comes near to us. That news should make our hearts leap for joy.

How often do we rejoice? Often our hearts are numb or cold to Jesus' call and God's presence with us. We are no King David, and because of that, we often hear the words "stir up" in the Collect Prayers of Advent. We pray that God would stir up our hearts because they do not respond to His coming. Instead of exploding in joy our hearts are heavy with longings and desires that have nothing to do with the Lord.

"Stir up our hearts, O Lord" for our hearts are heavy with discontent. We have sunk the roots of our lives into the bitter waters of jealousy and we have borne rotten fruit. We rejoice in things like retirement, sports games, or items on a bucket

list, but drawing near to the Lord? Well maybe we'll have more time for that next year. Our lips may acknowledge Him but our hearts are far from Him. Unlike King David we care far more about how we appear to others than how we appear to the Lord.

God knows this about us and yet still He desires to be with us. He is still interested in us. In fact, He is so interested in us that He desires to draw near to a whole world of people with sin stained hearts and give us all every reason to rejoice. Unborn John the Baptist understood the joy the Lord Almighty gives. When Mary visited Elizabeth, the unborn John leapt upon hearing the voice of the woman carrying the world's Savior. Something even more wonderful than the ark of the covenant had come. How much more reason then for John to leap like David. Mary carried none other than God's presence in human flesh Jesus Christ. God was drawing near not just to Jerusalem but to the whole world, forever.

Jesus was like us and yet He was fully divine. His holy sinless presence in Mary's womb made her something special; it made her the new and better bearer of God's presence. She was God's new ark of the covenant and she bore the new and greater Mercy Seat where sat Emmanuel.

Though we turn away from God, He still turned toward us in Jesus' incarnation. He became incarnate so that He could be stripped and humiliated for our offenses and die on a cross to pay for our indifference toward Him. Though it may not look like it at first glance, the most joyous sight we could ever see is the promised Son of David drawing near to Jerusalem to die for us. His joy in doing His Father's will was like King David's joy, but Jesus' joy in willingly going to the cross meant our acquittal and our resurrection to an eternal life with Him. The Child who came forth from Mary's womb would also come forth one day from His tomb, in triumph over sin and death, to reign on the throne of His father David forever.

The well-known Christmas hymn asks the question, "What Child Is This?" The answer should be enough to make our hearts leap like David. What Child Is This? It is the same God who drew near to John the Baptist and made him leap. This Child is the world's Joy-Bringer. Joy in the flesh. The sinner's delight. He is pure cheer for the heavyhearted and the oppressed.

Until then, we rejoice that He still draws near. In His Word and Sacraments He comes so near that the forgiveness He gives through His Word of Gospel goes right down into your heart and stirs it up, revives it, and refreshes it. He comes so near that the Word that made John leap takes residence in your heart and you can't help

but leap with gladness. He comes so near that His Holy Spirit fills your body and your heart and makes you a new creation.

He will one day draw near from His eternal throne one final time, and we will be near to Him in the flesh forever. So rejoice. Rejoice like David and John the Baptist. The Lord is at hand, and His name is Jesus.

Amen.

As we Gather

Children's Sermon