

Reflection for 3rd Sunday of Advent

One of the options for bible readings today is Luke 1:46-55- the Magnificat or Mary's Song. The young mother to be had gone to visit her older relative Elizabeth, who was also pregnant in an unexpected way (and whose son appears in today's gospel reading). The two of them rejoice together about what God is doing in their time and, in her excitement, Mary bursts into a song which includes these words:

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of
his servant...
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of
their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their
thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty."*

Mary recognised that she was loved and valued by God, and that he turns things around and upside down. This Christmas story is full of more examples:

The ordinary parents, the unsuitable delivery room, unwashed shepherds the first to hear the news, foreigners from the east recognising who the child was while his own rulers do not. Ultimately our faith rests on the biggest turn around of all - Jesus rising from death on Easter Day.

God still turns things around and upside down in our time.

What is it that *you* would like God to turn upside down today? With Mary, we can bring our hopes and dreams (and as much faith as we have) to God and see what he will do.

Revd Mike



NEXT SUNDAY 24.12.2023 4th Sunday of Advent
10.30am in the Hall

READINGS: OT 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16
NT Romans 16: 25-27
GOSPEL Luke 1: 26-38



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St Thomas, Exeter

17th December 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

10.30am in Hall

Today

10.30am in the Hall

Hymn Numbers

196 Hark! A herald voice is calling
98 Come, thou long expected Jesus
209 Hills of the north, rejoice

Tuesday 19th December

7.30pm House Group 'Something impossible'
6 Painter's Court.

Wednesday 20th December

10am Holy Communion (BCP)

Thursday 21st December

9.30—11am St Thomas Tots
No Knit & Natter until the 11th Jan 2024
3-5pm Warm Space in the Hall

Friday 22nd December

9.30am Morning Prayer
10am Staff Meeting



Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord"', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Post Communion

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when

your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before his face; who is alive and reigns now and for ever. **Amen**

NOTICES

Community Larder There will be a collection box in church on Sundays for food donations. The need remains great so please be mindful of our wider community.

House Group will run a weekly Advent Course beginning on 28th November and finishing on 19th December. We shall meet at 7.30pm at the home of John Payne, 6 Painter's Court. We will be looking at the film 'Miracle on 34th Street'.

Pioneering Parishes:

What: A series of four fortnightly webinars to help parishes start to move their energy outwards and become more pioneering.

When: Tuesday 9th January, Tuesday 23rd January, Tuesday 6 & Tuesday 20th February.

Time: 14.00-15.30.

Please refer to weekly email and/or speak to Fr David or Revd Sarah.

Christmas Eve Services:

Crib Service & Carols 4pm in the Hall

Midnight Mass 11.30pm in the Church. Wrap up warmly.

Knit & Natter will meet again after Christmas on Thursday 11th January 2024. Details from Jenny on 01392 498725

