

“Because of the Great Things God Has Done for Me”

In her Reflection on this Scripture, Kate Matthews (Huey) wrote, “In this week’s unique situation, we have four unlikely prophets gathered not in the wilderness but on the front step of Elizabeth’s home, two of them not even born yet (and John is already able to acknowledge the One who is greater).” Kate pointed out, **“The other two prophets are women, women with names and stories, women with voices and something to say, or in Mary’s case, something to sing.”**

Kate continued, “Women and babies: we’re definitely not ‘at the top of the heap,’ here, especially not when there’s an actual priest in the house, Zechariah, a professional, licensed and learned, knows-what-he’s-doing expert in matters of faith. Ironically, though, Zechariah is the very one in this scene without a voice, literally, since he’s been struck speechless during his own angelic visit.” Kate concluded, **“The stage is set this week, then, for us to have the rare opportunity to hear from the women and children for a change. And what a change they dream of!”** (“Moving with Mary’s Song” Reflection by Kate Matthews [Huey] on Weekly Seeds)

After Mary had a visitation by an angel, she went to visit her relative, Elizabeth. This much older cousin had been mentioned to Mary by the angel. Indeed, Elizabeth was already pregnant with her own miracle baby. The Scriptures are not clear as to why Mary went to see Elizabeth. I suspect, she went to make sure she was neither dreaming nor delusional. Immediately upon Mary’s words of greeting to Elizabeth, the future John the Baptist leapt within the older woman’s womb and the Holy Spirit came to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth spoke to Mary in **verses 42 through 45** *“in a loud voice, ‘You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. How happy you are to believe that the Lord’s message to you will come true!’”*

Mark Trotter shared, “A man in the hospital is being treated for cancer. He is estranged from the Church. He has this long list of things he can name for you in his indictment. He doesn’t like the Church in its present institutional form. But he is in the hospital. One day a priest walks into his room. He didn’t invite him in, he just walked in. The priest asked him, ‘Do you want to be anointed?’ That is the Catholic rite for the sick. The man said, ‘Yes.’ Then he wrote this. ‘Lying on my narrow, hospital bed, feeling the oil of gladness and healing, I knew I had little time. More importantly though, I felt by a wondrous grace that this was the first time in my memory that the Church was paying attention to me, individually, by name, naming me, praying for me to deal with my painful circumstances and my suffering, the suffering that is uniquely mine.’” The patient concluded, “All of a sudden I realized, I matter, I really matter. I still can’t get over the power of this feeling of mattering, of being an irreplaceable individual.”

Trotter concluded, “When the angel came to Mary, Mary must have said, ‘I matter, I really matter. I know now that I am an irreplaceable individual.’” (Mark Trotter, Collected Sermons, www.Sermons.com)

Mary, a very young woman, was facing a complicated and dangerous situation! She could have easily been stoned to death by the self-righteous adherents of her society’s predominate legalistic religious traditions because her pregnancy would have been proof of her being guilty of engaging in sex without being married. Or, she could have trusted God’s promise and boldly followed the more prophetic tradition of the Jews. After receiving Elizabeth’s reception of her, Mary chose the path of faith and that of God’s prophets. Apparently, Mary remembered the words of Hannah, who was childless for many years and then became the miraculous mother of Samuel, the prophet, who ruled as the last Judge of Israel and among other things anointed Saul as the first king of Israel and then anointed David as the king when God rejected Saul’s rule. Hannah had great trust in God’s promises and prayed boldly to God for a child. God answered Hannah’s prayer with her giving birth to Samuel.

Mary’s song in response to Elizabeth’s prophetic words showed she saw herself to be in a very similar state as Hannah, who was blessed by God’s merciful love, so Mary declared in **verses 46 through 55**, *“My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior, for He has remembered me, His lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is Holy; from one generation to another He shows mercy to those who honor Him. He has stretched out His mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the*

lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has kept the promise He made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of His servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all His descendants forever!”

Mary’s song prophetically recalled God’s way of justice, mercy, faithfulness, and love. Much of what Mary revealed was also taught and lived by her son, Jesus. For example, he taught “the first would be last” in Luke 13:30 and “your heart will always be where your riches are” in Luke 12:34. Mary’s song and Jesus’ life both demonstrated trust and dependence on God’s Faithfulness and Love.

Ronald Goetz compared Mary’s message to our own calling as people of God – followers of Jesus Christ, saying, “Certainly we are not to remain passive recipients. We are engraced so as to be active and creative. But at the root of everything is God’s initiative and grace. We cannot create ourselves, we cannot redeem ourselves, we cannot ‘ascend into heaven ... to bring Christ down’ and we cannot ‘descend into the abyss, to bring Christ up from the dead.’ Everything that is comes from God. Every hope we have for the redemption of all things comes from God.” Goetz concluded, “If we think seriously in these terms – upon which the Reformation was itself grounded – how can we fail to realize that we have all been made pregnant by God’s grace? We are all Mary.” (religiononline.org, “The Mary in Us All” [Luke 1:4b-42] by Ronald Goetz)

Assuming Goetz is correct about all of us being like Mary – made new or transformed by God’s Grace – the Divine Parent’s Self-Giving and Sacrificial Agape Love, what are the implications for us as individuals and as a community of believers? “Michael S. Bennett asks, ‘How many Marys and Elizabeths (or Zechariahs and Josephs) might there be sitting in the pews, awaiting an opportunity to connect more deeply with the people around them? How many long to connect their small story with the larger stories of God?’” (Reported by Kate Matthews [Huey] in Weekly Seeds)

Alan Brehm got to the heart of what it means to join in singing Mary’s song, when he wrote, “**The only way for us to sing Mary’s song with joy and hope is for us to work at lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, and restoring those who are disenfranchised.**” “That was what Jesus came to do — to begin God’s work of making all things new, of setting right the wrongs and lifting the burdens we all carry. That’s why we celebrate Advent and Christmas. It is a time for us to focus our attention on God’s work in this broken world. It is a time of looking for the salvation that God has promised, and a time of singing for joy over what God is already doing among us. It is a time to celebrate the work of restoration God is carrying out in the human family — the whole human family. And it is a time for us to join that work.”

Brehm continued, “In Advent we sing because we look forward to something better than the violence and suffering and injustice all around us. We look forward to the kindness and generosity and compassion of our God being fulfilled for all the peoples of the world. We sing because we look forward to ‘peace on earth, and mercy mild’; it is the heart and soul of our faith. We sing because of the good news that in Jesus the Christ God has entered this world definitively to set everything right and to make all things new. And we sing because in and through this marvelous event, ‘light and life to all he brings.’” Brehm concluded, “**This song of hope is what enables us to look past our fears and our hurts and our suspicions and view those around us with God’s compassionate love.**” “This joyful faith is what gives us energy to sustain our love as we join in God’s work of transforming all creation by making a difference in our corner of the world.” (The Waking Dreamer, “Song of Hope” by Alan Brehm)

This Christmas, consider what Mighty Deeds of God our Divine Parent has done for you, us, and all people! Join in God’s work of transformation and sing the joyous song of the Almighty’s faithfulness to our Divine Parent’s Promise of the end of injustice, death, separation, and division. Let’s join Mary in singing and living, “**From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.**” Amen.