

**BLESSED IS SHE THAT BELIEVED**

Luke 1:39-55

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2018 | ADVENT  
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT  
YEAR C

<i>Old Testament</i>	Micah 5:2–5a
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 85
<i>New Testament</i>	Hebrews 10:5–10
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 1:39–55

***NON-COMMUNION***

MEDFORD

Psalm

Opening Hymn - CW 24 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

Hymn of the Day – CW 274 My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord

Closing Hymn - CW 38 vv. 1-2, 13, 15 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 108 Creator of the Starry Height (Pastor sings vv. 1, 5)

Chief Hymn – ELH 47 My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord

Closing Hymn – ELH 124 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

Luke 1:39–55 (CSB)

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> Then she exclaimed with a loud cry: “Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! <sup>43</sup> How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!”

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

**My soul praises the greatness of the Lord,**

<sup>47</sup> **and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

<sup>48</sup> **because he has looked with favor  
on the humble condition of his servant.**

**Surely, from now on all generations  
will call me blessed,**

<sup>49</sup> **because the Mighty One  
has done great things for me,  
and his name is holy.**

<sup>50</sup> **His mercy is from generation to generation  
on those who fear him.**

<sup>51</sup> **He has done a mighty deed with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud  
because of the thoughts of their hearts;**

<sup>52</sup> **he has toppled the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted the lowly.**

<sup>53</sup> **He has satisfied the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.**

<sup>54</sup> **He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy**

<sup>55</sup> **to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he spoke to our ancestors.**

### **BLESSED IS SHE THAT BELIEVED**

Dear fellow redeemed: How many words do you see in a year? How many do you hear? Words! Words! Words! And how many can you believe? You don’t even have to be very cynical to expect to be lied to. It is an important thing in our lives to distinguish between what is the word of God, and therefore absolutely true, and what is merely human opinion or (worse yet) deceit.

And what about unique mystical experiences? I don’t know exactly how the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, but I’ve known people who have claimed to hear God speak to them, or even to be visited by an angel, and it was false and deceitful. They clearly did not hear God nor were they visited by an angel, because what they said was both contrary to Scripture and demonstrably untrue.

In the case of Mary - and Zechariah a few months earlier - they evidently had no question at all that they were confronted by an angel, a messenger of the Lord. But in both cases they were confronted by seemingly unbelievable messages. Zechariah was told that his wife, old and barren, would conceive and bear a son, and Mary was told something even more unbelievable, that she, a virgin, would conceive and bear a son who would be called holy, the Son of God.

Both were confronted with words – the words of God. Mary believed the message. Zechariah did not until later.

Move ahead a few months and Mary is in Judea to visit Elizabeth. The word of God came again, only this time it was through Elizabeth. **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.** <sup>42</sup> **Then she exclaimed with a loud cry: “Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed!** <sup>43</sup> **How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** <sup>44</sup> **For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me.** <sup>45</sup> **Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!”**

Notice that the message of the Holy Spirit included also the blessing upon Mary – and praise for her – who believed God’s promise to her through the angel, Gabriel.

Every year you hear the words of God in the account of Christ’s nativity, and so do countless others, because as much as people try to secularize Christmas, the story is just too huge to miss. What people hear are the words of God because the Holy Spirit inspired them in the prophets in the Old Testament and the Apostles and Evangelists in the New Testament. 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) <sup>16</sup> **All Scripture is breathed out [inspired] by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,**

Scripture contains its own claims of inspiration; we call that the internal evidence. This is where the prophets say, “Thus says the Lord,” or as in Mary’s case the messenger of God appears. We see it when Paul says, 1 Corinthians 2:13 (CSB) <sup>13</sup> **We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.**

The external evidence is that we see the truth of Scripture played out, as when the prophecies are fulfilled, dozens in the case of Jesus, but also Daniel’s account of the empires that would come in the Middle East. It also includes the correct depictions of history and of human character.

Nevertheless, the conviction that Scripture is the word of God is something the Holy Spirit Himself works in the hearts of believers. What we have here is God’s word, given on Sinai, given through the prophets, given through the apostles who recorded the very words of Christ.

In the account of the nativity, the birth of Christ, you hear the words of God.

With His words from the prophets, evangelists and apostles, He Himself tells you of the calamity that sin has brought on the human race – the sin of Adam that doomed us to be born alienated from God, and the sin of each person because we are born sinners.

He will tell us of the infinite grace and mercy that moved Him to become one of us so that He could be our redeemer, making satisfaction for the sins of all. He became one of us. He was “incarnate.” He was born a human being, in the flesh and body of a human being. He is God from eternity, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and man, born of the virgin, Mary.

These are the words that were brought to Mary, and Elizabeth spoke God's own blessing upon her, **blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.**

The same goes for you. Hear, believe, and you are blessed, for Jesus Himself said, Luke 11:28 (ESV) <sup>28</sup> **But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

AMEN.