

**2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Ro 16:25-27;
Lu 1:26-38; Lu 1:46b-55 – 4th Sunday of Advent**

At the time the Gospel was written down, here by Luke, there was nobody less powerful than a teenage girl, unless it would be a newborn baby.

Today we hear powerful words from a powerless person. It is shocking. Mary of Nazareth proclaims that justice has already been accomplished. God has brought God's will to bear – and all things have been set right, she says.

Listen: “My soul exalts the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond slave.” Mary acknowledges her lowly status. A bond-slave has sold out completely to the Master – in this case, God. She proclaims that God has seen her and has given her consideration and regard in her powerlessness.

Over history, a woman is the very emblem and essence of powerlessness. In Mary's song, we hear echoes of the songs of great women in the

nation's past: Miriam sister of Moses, Deborah Judge of Israel and Hannah wife of Elkanah and mother of Samuel. Miriam sings a song of rejoicing and victory of her people coming out of Egypt. Deborah rejoices in Israel's victory over the Canaanites and the establishment of a nation. Hannah sings for joy to be pregnant after years of barrenness, at the dawn of the age of the prophets.

And now Mary sings about the cosmic shift taking place – no, the cosmic shift that has already taken place. Mary, like Miriam as Israel enters the Promised Land, and Deborah establishing the nation, and Hannah rejoicing in her deliverance from barrenness – Mary sees that Roman oppression will end. Divine justice prevails.

Mary speaks a truth that transcends time and space – **God's mercy is/was/will be upon generation after generation toward those who (are in awe) of Him.** The Bible in English must put Mary's words in the past tense, but in Greek she is saying that the Almighty has done/is doing/will do mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart. She exclaims that God can always be

trusted to bring down rulers from their thrones, and is always faithful to exalt those who are humble. **We** see God acting in the bounds of time. He is **also** acting in eternity, where we cannot perceive His great power. God was acting and is acting and will always act in ultimate terms. Mary is praising the God who moves history and politics by His promises, His presence forever. God's name is God's Word – and God's word is promise – and promise is covenant.

“For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed,” says Mary.

“For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.” She celebrates her personal blessing. Every woman in Israel has always dreamed of being the mother of Messiah. It would be the greatest honor to be part of God's mighty deeds – foretold and anticipated in every generation. Imagine, if you may, the humiliation and dishonor of being conquered and occupied by the power of the Roman Caesar. In effect, down comes the stars and stripes, up the flagpole outside the capitol goes the great eagle banner of the Roman Empire. This is what Israel

has experienced politically and militarily. Hard for us to imagine.

But this young woman has been given the vision: the downfall of tyranny. Mary already sees the vindication of God through the Messiah God has brought into the world through her. The Holy Spirit has made her the vessel of God's gracious intention. And, she has been given clear insight to discern the mighty work God has done/is doing/will do.

The promise of a political Messiah whose reign will never end was given to David many generations earlier. There is a great lesson in the holy will of God in the story. David feels the lack of a temple worthy of God's presence. The king points out that he has built a great, comfortable house for himself from cedar. Yet, the ark of the covenant sits in a tabernacle fashioned by artisans under Moses' direction in the wilderness. David has conscience that he is living in comfort – yet God is still camping out. David wishes to bless God. But, the Lord will do things His own way. God does not need a house to dwell in, He says. Rather, He chooses that moment to reveal

to his favorite shepherd, the ruler of Israel, that his house, the house of David son of Jesse – of the tribe of Judah – will be established forever by the will of God.

The young woman, Mary of Nazareth, is to bring forth this very Messiah, this Shepherd-King Jesus Christ.

The prophecy is being fulfilled in her. God causes nations to rise and fall. God establishes rulers – or takes them off their thrones. Mary’s words echo all the great prophets from Isaiah right down to John Baptist:

“He has filled the hungry with good things;
And sent away the rich empty-handed.
“He has given help to Israel His servant,
In remembrance of His mercy,
As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

The high will be made low. The low will be lifted up. Those who are full will be emptied. Those who are empty will be filled. The justice of God transcends politics and power struggles in the world. The Lord deals lovingly and mercifully

with His people – and even with all creation – now and forever. We are given Messiah – Jesus Christ – to bear all our sins. This Shepherd-King leads us out of condemnation and into heavenly places forever. Amen.