

Luke 1:39-56 - "Preparing the Way for Jesus through Elizabeth and Mary"
Midweek Advent 2 - 2021

While our Gospel reading for this second Wednesday in Advent is a little "Awww," sweeter than last weeks, it's definitely more awesome. We live in a world which is, by the power of God, manufacturing some pretty awesome things. I think it's pretty awesome that using our home computers we can play beautiful hymns through our pipe organ by the touch of a button. But this is still nothing compared to the awesome ways God has worked in the past and continues to work right here this evening to bless and keep us.

Our Gospel reading for this evening is a flash back to a family gathering between two women, two prophets and a priest. The two women were related, Elizabeth and Mary and they were both "great with child." Elizabeth had been unable to have a child all her life, and now, after she was long past child bearing years, God enable her to miraculously conceive a child with her husband Zechariah (who was around 100 years old).

The child within Elizabeth would be called John. Such a pregnancy was certainly miraculous, but not unheard of. Think back to God's people like Abraham and Sarah who also had a child in their old age, Isaac (Genesis 21). Mary's miraculously pregnancy, however, tops them all. Not only was she a virgin, but the baby within her was none other than God in the flesh, conceived by God the Holy Spirit. That's one of the most awesome things of all, and both pregnancies were foretold in OT times, as we heard in our OT readings.

The two baby boys, not yet born, were the two prophets at this family gathering. Both were unable to speak with their mouths, yet both were already exercising their prophetic callings. John the Baptist, who was called to prepare the way for the Lord, leap for joy when Jesus and His mother entered the room and greeted Elizabeth. John was already pointing to Jesus as "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Through the mouth of His mother, similar words were spoken when she referred to the baby in Mary's womb as her "*Lord*." How awesome is that?!

It's even more awesome when you think of who was ultimately communicating through John and Elizabeth. It was the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ! Even though Jesus' human voice box wasn't developed yet, He was still truly God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through His servants, like John, Elizabeth and Mary, the Word of God in the flesh was pointing to Himself as the promised Messiah and Savior of the world!

The Son of God in Mary's womb blessed them and us through the actions and words of His servants. The words from Mary's mouth were spoken in the form of a OT psalm. In this song the Lord, through Mary, reminds us that He is God our Savior who is mindful of the humble state of His faithful servants; who comes in mercy; and yet at the same time comes to scatter our enemies, including the sinful nature in each one of us.

How would He scatter these enemies? That's where the priest comes into the picture. One of the main duties of the OT priest was to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. The priest at this family gather was the baby Jesus. He came to offer the ultimate and final sacrifice for the sins of all people. He was that sacrifice, who would be crucified, dead and buried to free us from our sins. That's why He came in the flesh. Not to simply give us an example to follow, but to take our sins upon Himself and suffer the judgement we deserve because of them so that we could once again be united to God both spiritually and physically, as it was in the beginning.

How does God unite Himself with us today and bless us? The resurrected Lord continues to come to us through His Word. Through God's Word to Mary, spoken by an angel, God blessed Mary not only by strengthening her faith, but by conceiving within her His physical presence in Jesus Christ.

For you and me, the Lord continues to conceive and sustain new and eternal life in us by creating and sustaining our faith in His Word through His Word and Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. And since Jesus continues to be in His flesh, we can even say that God unites Himself to us physically as our Savior. He not only physically touches us through His Sacraments, but He physically enters into us to bless us with His presence within us together with all that He earned for us through His death and resurrection, making us sons of God and heirs of His heavenly kingdom. That's beyond awesome!

One final, awesome thing. God now calls each one of us, as His children, to deliver His Son, Jesus Christ, to others. Like John, Elizabeth and Mary, we are God's holy people who are called by God to conceive in their lives the Son of God, Jesus Christ, by telling them not only about His birth but also about His death and resurrection for their eternal salvation and ours.

What motivates and enables us to do this awesome thing? The Good News of God's saving presence within us. How safe and secure do you think Mary felt knowing that the almighty and merciful God was not only with her but within her? The same Good News of God's almighty and merciful presence with and within us makes us just as safe and secure now and forever, enabling us to let even the unbelieving and antagonist world know of God's awesome blessings for them in Christ Jesus.

All glory be to our awesome God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.