

# Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 23, 2018

Micah 5: 1-4a Hebrew 10: 5-10 Luke 1: 39-45

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God in our midst, we are told a story about Mary, a central character in that event. It is a simple and unpretentious story. Having been presented with the news that God would intervene in her life and she would become pregnant with a child by the action of the Holy Spirit, she took this in, accepted it and moved on with her life by taking time to visit with her relative who also was with child. Such is the way that we can appreciate the story of Mary and Elizabeth that we heard today.



At first we might simply view this account as an exemplary reaction by Mary when she learned of her relative's pregnancy. She goes off to help her. They are two mothers-to-be assisting one another, sharing the anticipation, the excitement, the difficulties of their respective pregnancies.

Giving further thought, however, to this story I believe that it reveals to us even deeper symbolism and meaning. This can be found in the manner in which these two women shared the

mystery of what was happening to them.

On the one hand, like Elizabeth, we can ask the question ourselves of how is it that we are so loved by God that God, indeed, is present to each of us in life. Mary's visit to Elizabeth, beyond reflecting the concern of one relative for another, announces the generosity of God that is available to us all. It is an opportunity available to anyone who is open to the goodness being shown to appreciate how significant each of us is to our loving God and how this can and does affect our own manner of living in relation to all of humanity and to all of creation.

On the other hand, in Mary, there is an even greater reminder of what is being offered to us by the Christmas event, the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we are to recognize that each of us is like Mary as this event takes place.

We are like Mary because our Faith proclaims that we possess within ourselves the Savior of the world whom we share in Word and Sacrament. We are like Mary because we can say that the peace of God's presence for which our world desperately longs is now here in the Lord who is with us. We are like Mary because we have been blessed by the opportunity to make known to the world the depth of God's love for us.

In the story of these two women which we recall in these days before Christmas we are reminded of what ought to be the central message of that celebration. It is our great fortune to share in the generosity shown to us by the coming of our

Lord to us. It is our opportunity to proclaim by our words, by our actions, by our lives, the magnificent love and kindness of our good and gracious God.