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Luke 3:7-18

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Advent 4 Year C

Prepared for:  Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

* Background: Mary, a young girl, betrothed but not yet married, is visited by an angel who tells her that she’s going to bear a child—the Son of God. The angel even tells her the child’s name: Savior.
  + You know what happens next. Mary acquiesces with some measure of confusion over the practicality of it all, but with no apparent hesitation.
  + Luke’s gospel omits her husband-to-be’s response, but it’s not unknown to twenty-first readers of scripture.
    - His first instinct is to end the relationship.
  + Recognize this: Even though Mary easily submitted to the angel’s request, it’s a safe bet that as soon as the angel departed, she felt some anxiety.
* Unmarried and pregnant, Mary certainly faced judgment from the culture around her.
  + It probably didn’t take long before she started to feel afraid, alone, worried.
    - Maybe she even questioned her own sanity in her obedience.
  + It’s possible—perhaps even likely—that Mary “went with haste” to that Judean town where her relative lived, in order to escape her own hometown.
* You know that feeling, don’t you? You know that deep-seated desire to run away, to hide from the world around you!
  + This is an insanely busy season for many of us!
    - Shopping, decorating, wrapping, baking, cleaning, organizing, traveling,….oh, and worshipping!...
      * We’re pulled in a variety of directions.
    - Someone needs something you can’t provide. Or you still haven’t found the perfect gift for someone. Or you burned the entire batch of your spouse’s favorite cookies.
    - And maybe it feels like none of it is quite enough.
* Maybe you, like Mary, need someone to remind you that God is in you. God is with you. God loves you.
* Mary shows up at Elizabeth’s home and, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” Elizabeth greets her with joy, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”
  + More than that, though, Elizabeth’s words are an echo of the angel who announced Mary’s pregnancy, “[T]he mother of my Lord comes to me.”
  + And, “As soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.”
* Mary’s response to Elizabeth has come to be known as the Magnificat—Mary’s song of praise toward God for the gift she has been given.
  + Elizabeth’s words, then, were a powerful reminder that
    - Mary is not alone.
      * Elizabeth’s pregnancy may have happened in a more “normal” way than Mary’s, but she’s still in unknown territory as she prepares to give birth to the child who will prepare the way for Mary’s son.
    - Mary is about to bring God into the world.
      * Every baby is unique and a gift. But Mary’s child is the only begotten Son of God!
    - Mary is loved.
* Now let me give you those same reminders.
  + You are not alone. Look around you. (No, seriously, look around you!) Every single one of your sisters and brothers is with you.
    - First, the obvious: The simple act of being present, even here in worship. Prayer. Shared ministry.
  + You, too, bring God into the world around you.
    - Gifts to friends and neighbors. Christmas cards. And, although it might sound counter-intuitive, you can make God known simply by resting.
      * Taking time for Sabbath and self-care points others to how deeply you value God.
  + You, too, are loved.
    - I know this because Jesus—the child who is yet unborn in today’s lesson—***was born***! His life, ministry, death and resurrection show the depth of God’s love for each and every one of you.
      * For each and every one of ***us***!
      * Amen.