

Order For the Public Worship of God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. John 1:1

* If you are able, please stand for these acts of worship.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME & GREETING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ORGAN PRELUDE “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” Plainsong, arr. Faith
(Alyssa Connell, Flute)

CHORAL INTROIT “He is Born” French Carol, arr. Wilson

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH The Conley family

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in
the Lord their God.

**People: Our God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in
them, who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the
oppressed, loves the righteous.**

Leader: The Lord sets free prisoners, makes the blind see and lifts those who
are bowed down.

**People: Our God watches over strangers and upholds the orphan and
the widow and feeds the hungry.**

Leader: No matter if you are poor, hungry, a prisoner, or a stranger, if your
hope is in the Lord, come and let us worship together.

GATHERING PRAYER

*OPENING HYMN NO. 168 “Angels, from the Realms of Glory”

WORSHIP OF GOD

CALL TO CONFESSION

1st Timothy says, the grace of God overflows for us through Christ Jesus, who came into the
world to save sinners. Trusting in God’s grace, let us confess our sins together.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

**Patient Lord, forgive our lack of faith in Your loving power. We
look around us, and all that we see is what we don’t have. We fail
to notice the daily blessings You lavish upon us. Clear our
blindness. Help us see the needs of others. Strengthen us and
move us from lame excuses for not serving You. Help us to truly
listen to one another, not with our pat answers ready, but with
loving and generous hearts. Forgive us, Lord. Heal us and make
us ready to be Your disciples. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. AMEN.**

MOMENT FOR SILENT CONFESSION

LITANY OF ASSURANCE

Leader: Jesus comes as Lord, and Jesus comes as Savior. Believe the Good
News of the Gospel, and know, you are forgiven.

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven; thanks be to God!

* GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without end! Amen, Amen

TIME FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES

Ms. Lisa Davis

(Children 3K through 2nd grade may leave for Children's Worship Service.

McArn Building, Room 40.)

*CONGREGATIONAL HYMN NO. 159

"What Child Is This"

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever! Amen

TITHES & OFFERINGS

Invitation

Offertory Anthem "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt" Carl Schalk

The Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen

*Prayer of Dedication

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE LESSON

Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! ²I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. ³Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. ⁴When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day, their plans perish. ⁵Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on, all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped

his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham, and to his descendants forever.”

Leader: These are the words of God for the people of God

People: Thanks be to God!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Holy Spirit, that in Your Light we may see Light, in Your truth, find freedom, and in Your Will, discover peace.

Through Christ our Lord, we pray. **Amen.**

SERMON

“What God Has Done”

The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke are like a musical. There is a dialogue that sets a scene and plot points, and then a hymn is placed as a response to the dialogue in praise of God. It's very artistic, considering Luke's claims of being analytical in his writings.

For those unfamiliar with these passages, they are commonly referred to by their Latin names: the Magnificat (1:46–55) is the song of Mary; the Benedictus (1:68–79) is the song of Zechariah; the Gloria in Excelsis (2:14) is the song of the angels, and the Nunc Dimittis (2:29–32) is the song of Simeon. Reading them as a response of praise to the announcement and arrival of the promised savior is especially instructive.

Today's lesson comes to us just after Mary's trip to see Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth, who had been barren, was pregnant. Elizabeth, upon seeing Mary, is filled with the Holy Spirit and tells her that she is blessed among women.

Mary's response to this event is the Magnificat (our lesson today). She begins by singing that her soul magnifies the Lord. This is a significant statement right up front. Not her voice as she sings, but her soul that magnifies. Her essence is magnifying the Lord to the world. It is a beautiful, artistic, and poignant statement by Mary.

Without being in the same state of mind as Mary, I can stand up here behind a pulpit at Christmas time, with all my education and preparation, and shout till I'm blue in the face and never make the same impact of magnification about our Lord as someone whose very soul is right with Jesus. This is something we should all, as Christians, strive to accomplish. This is what Advent is designed to prepare us for.

In v.47, Mary's subsequent claim is that God is her savior. This is another very personal and very impactful statement. Upon hearing the news from the angel, Gabriel, Mary could have reacted the same way Zechariah did because Zechariah didn't believe Gabriel about Elizabeth's

conception. As a result, he was rendered mute until his son John was born. [Maybe a little early Christmas present for Elizabeth?]

Anyway, Mary was considered by all biblical scholars to have been a nobody in society. To be pregnant and unmarried Child in that part of the world was a death sentence. She was not of noble birth, and her hometown of Nazareth was considered a hole in the wall. (Remember in John's Gospel when Phillip goes to find Nathanael to tell him about Jesus, [chapter 1:46](#), Nathanael says, "[Can anything good come out of Nazareth?](#)")

Mary's first instinct is not to run away or hide or in any way disappear for nine months as many young women throughout history have been made to do. No, her first instinct is to go and see Elizabeth, who is also experiencing a Miracle from God. She wants to celebrate.

By claiming that God is her savior, Mary states that she has a greater need than her strength can handle. This is a claim that the poor, the oppressed, and the hungry make because they have no means to save themselves. By juxtaposing this argument, the Proud are excluded from this claim. The Proud are not lowly.

The proud are, by default, one of two types of people.

- 1) They are those of means, privilege, and position. They do not know God because they don't need God to save them in their place of privilege. They would never claim lowliness because they believe all they have is due to their hard work and position.

OR....

- 2) They believe that this world is all there will be. "It is what it is," and that one can never rise above their station, so why bother?

Either way, Pride is the equivalence of ignorance.

The claim that God is my savior is a surrender to the fact that God is one who blesses. Author Alan Culpepper writes, [that] "Blessings always come from trusting that God's Word will be fulfilled."

Mary believed Gabriel, unlike Zechariah. She trusted in the Power of God to make what many people would consider a curse to be a blessing. If she had doubts, the words of her song do not betray them.

In vv.50-53, Mary moves from the personal to the general. Claiming that God's "mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." Anyone can have blessings like she and Elizabeth have experienced if they Trust and Fear the Lord. Again, it is a surrender to a higher power that the proud will not submit to.

Mary may well have had Psalm 146 on her mind as she sang these words. The Hebrew inside Psalm 146 is very much poetic in nature, like the song of Mary. And it speaks some of the same types of language that Mary uses. However, the Hebrew participles that are used in 146 are more active than our English translation implies with normal verbs.

(Page 545 Pew Bible) vv.6-8 says, (when speaking of God) ⁶who **made** heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who **keeps** faith forever; ⁷who **executes** justice for the oppressed; who **gives** food to the hungry. The LORD **sets** the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD **opens** the eyes of the blind.

These verbs are more active in Hebrew. The action is not just something that has happened, something that is now happening, or something that will happen. In a temporal sense, it is happening in the past, present, and future, all at once. It is continuous, from generation to generation to future generations.

In English, we have to add helping verbs to get closer to the meaning the Hebrew expresses in one word. My translation [of the Hebrew] would go something like this.

[it is God...]

⁶ who **makes and is making** heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who **has and is keeping** faith forever; ⁷ who **has and is executing** justice for the oppressed; who **has and is giving** food to the hungry. The LORD **has and is setting** the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD **has and is opening** the eyes of the blind.

[not as poetic, but is more concise]

Mary knows that God has been, is now, and forever will be her savior. She has no doubts, and she sings her love of God to the world.

[Back to the NT passage] In vv.54-55, Mary uses the same temporal argument to show that God has done the same for Israel as God has done for her.

For many during Advent, this song is uninspiring. They sit in the pew, and when they hear it, it doesn't register as anything special. But for the lowly, this song is a song of Hope, a song of freedom, a song of liberation. If God can do all this for a little girl from the backwoods of Galilee, God can surely do the same for someone who lives in rural South Carolina, or the backwoods of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, or Tennessee.

This is the Good News of Mary's song. You do not have to be poor, homeless, hungry, or any of those other things to experience the saving power of Jesus Christ. God has been, is now, and will be changing lives, saving souls, and blessing those that release their Pride and claim the Grace of Jesus.

This is what Advent is, a reminder that God will take care of you. God will free you from the burdens of this world if you trust and believe, Like Mary. God has done it in the past, God is doing it right now, and God will continue until there is no need for Advent. Because then we will see the risen Lord, and we will all sing like Mary.

