

CAROLING THROUGH CHRISTMAS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Luke 1.39-56 | December 22, 2019
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I. Introduction to this Study

This fourth Sunday of Advent we continue singing and reflecting on the Carols of Christmas.

We are called to be an expectant people, with our hearts and minds reflecting on the power and hope found in the words, "Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus". And so, we wait with anticipation these next few days to celebrate the miracle and mystery of the incarnation - Jesus' birth in the little (not quiet!) town of Bethlehem. The Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Glory to God in the highest!!!

This passage of Scripture helps us recognize that Mary serves as a wonderful example as she gives God the glory during what must have been a difficult situation. In this Bible story, Mary is visiting her relative Elizabeth who is six months pregnant with the child who will be known as John the Baptist.

II. Connecting with One Another

What is your favorite thing about Christmas?

If you were told that you were to have a child this year, how would you react?

Which would you find easier to believe—a promise from God through an angel or a promise through the Bible? Why?

When was the last time you doubted God? What caused your doubt?

When were you fearful but believing? How did God meet you?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Luke 1.39-45.

Whom do you contact when you have good news to share?

How might Mary have felt when Elizabeth greeted her? Discuss the significance of Luke providing the miraculous detail (v.41) of the baby (John) leaping in Elizabeth's when Mary greeted her...

How is Mary's faith an example to you? What do you appreciate most about Mary? In what way would you like to be more like Mary?

b. Read Luke 46-56.

How Does Mary envision herself?



From Mary's song of response, how does your concept of God compare to this?

- c. From the words of this song, what kind of family did Mary come from? What song has been playing "in your heart" lately?
- d. For what does Mary praise God in this song? Reflect a moment...what do you need to praise God for in your life?
- e. Of the attributes of God celebrated in Mary's song, which do you appreciate the most? Which challenges you the most? why?

IV. Digging Deeper

- a. Read Luke 1.26-38. (It will be the scripture reading before the sermon.) You might even want to read Luke 1.5-25 as well. How do these passages of Scripture help provide context to Mary's visit with Elizabeth during the first three months of her pregnancy?

What stands out to you about Zechariah and Elizabeth? How would the birth of a son affect Zechariah and Elizabeth?

How does Gabriel's word to Mary compare with his word to Zechariah? How does Mary respond differently than Zechariah?

What truths about Jesus are emphasized?

- b. Luke records Jesus' birth with Mary's perspective. Consider Joseph's perspective in Matthew 1.18-24; 2.13-16, 19-23. Jesus' adoptive father also had a unique faith. What did he go through?

V. Pray

- a. Praise God for the gift of His Son Jesus, who is our Savior, Lord, and Messiah. Thank God for being the only source of hope.
- b. Ask for prayer in areas of your life where you need a deeper trust that "nothing is impossible with God".
- c. How can this group pray for you and support you during this Christmas season?

Lyrics

1. Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

2. Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

