

Sermon Luke 1 39 56 4th S in Advent series C

Sermon: 4th Sunday in Advent

Text: Luke 1:39-56 (v.46)

Theme: I rejoice in God, my Savior! (Why?)

Goal: The joy of Christmas is based on God's promise to be our Savior.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Christmas is a time of joy and happiness. Everyone is excited about the holidays, trips, dinners, family reunion, and gifts. It is all fine this way and I personally enjoy this season a lot! But some people miss the real reason for this special season. If it is only a big and nice holiday to feast, we are not celebrating the true Christmas. Maybe it is not in the church where I should say this: If you are here this means that you know the reason for the joy and feast. But even we as Christians sometimes are overwhelmed with all the preparations and excitements. It's always good to sit down and to think about the real reason of all these feast and joy.

At the Christmas Play I asked to the children why they were happy. And they answered right: they were happy not just because of the Christmas Tree and the gifts, but because Jesus is born.

Mary gives us the reason for the Christmas' Joy in her song of praise: "My soul glorifies the LORD and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"

I – The Visit – Joy!

Mary and Elizabeth had special reasons to be happy. Elizabeth was not a young woman anymore, and she and her husband Zechariah didn't have children because Elizabeth was barren (Luke 1:7). By a special grace of God, an angel appeared to the Priest Zachariah when he was

performing his duties in the temple and announced him that they would have a baby, whose name should be John. More than the happiness to have a child, the message of the angel goes further: Their son John would prepare the way for the Messiah, who was to come soon, being His forerunner. The faith and the hope of the faithful people of the Old Testament were to be accomplished! Elizabeth was very happy that she had been chosen by God to be part of His salvation plan!

There is now another reason to rejoice: Elizabeth's relative Mary was chosen to be the mother of the promised Messiah! Two big events in the same family! Mary was a very young lady, probably in her teens, engaged to a carpenter called Joseph. The same angel Gabriel, who had appeared to Zechariah, appeared to Mary giving her the good news that she would become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit and that her baby would be the promised Messiah. The angel also told Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant, being in her sixth month of pregnancy. Mary was so excited about all this good news that she "got ready and hurried" after the appearance of the angel to visit Elizabeth, who was living in a little town south of Nazareth, in the hilly country close to Jerusalem. She stayed three months with Elizabeth, - probably till the baby John was born. The two women had a lot to talk about and to share. In spite of the big difference of their age – Elizabeth was an old woman and Mary was a teenager – they both had the same faith and the same hope, and they both were chosen by God to accomplish His gracious plan to save humankind.

The dialog between the two women is something amazing! Elizabeth recognized immediately that Mary was "the mother of her LORD" and that the little fetus less than a month old in the womb of Mary was the

Savior of the world. And Elizabeth and Mary shouted for joy and blessed God for His kindness to both women and to all!

II – The Magnificat – Joy!

Mary's reaction was to praise God by a song. In this song, she confesses her faith and proclaims God's great deeds to save His people. The song is known as "The Magnificat"; *the title comes from the opening words of this poem in the Latin translation*^(ABC 1207). – Let us highlight some parts of Mary's song:

"My soul glorifies the LORD and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"

Mary recognized that she also needed a Savior. She was not holy by herself. She glorifies God and rejoices because God had had mercy on her, chosen her among all other women to be the mother of the Son of God. – According to several Bible interpreters, the women in Israel were conscious that the Savior wouldn't come from heaven at once, but that He would be born from a virgin according to the prophecies. Mary had this faith and she believed in the words of the angel.

"...for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant." – God is not a God of far. He knows each of us and He is mindful of us. His eyes are always open upon us.

"...the Mighty One has done great things for me – Holy is His name!"

Whatever we are, whatever we have, are gifts of God. Again and again we read in the Bible, especially in the Psalms, reminders of God's great deeds. God was active not only in the history of the Biblical time, but He is still active and everything is under His control. We have to recognize it at our lives as well and praise Him for the great deeds He did and does for us.

“His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation.” I like this! When I look back to my family, to the very first ones who immigrated to Brazil, and go through the several generations till the new generations nowadays, I have to thank God for His faithfulness in preserving our family in His grace and mercy. We all rely on God’s mercy only. Without His mercy we are lost.

“He has filled the hungry with good things...” Christmas is time to share. How can someone have a Merry Christmas if he doesn’t have anything to eat? We cannot solve all the hunger problem of the world; but we can help one or two people. And they will thank God for our love.

Conclusion: *“Jesus is the reason for this Season”* I read this on several signs when we were in America for Christmas four years ago. Even in South Africa some people are trying to (eliminate) change the meaning of the Christmas Holidays because not all citizens are Christians. We as Christians have to give a good witness of our real joy in Jesus. - Our four year old grandson goes to a Kindergarden in Israel where he is the only Christian. During this Season, he goes every day to the Kindergarten wearing his Santa’s red cap, singing *“God loves me dearly”*, and he takes with him children’s booklets with the Christmas story, or a character of the Nativity scene, or a little gift he got in advance. The teacher had asked what this means. And our daughter had the opportunity to tell a little bit about Jesus and about Christmas to him. - Short and little signs of faith and joy in Jesus... If each of us lights a candle, we will have a brilliant Christmas! But if we don’t light our candle, people will still remain in darkness, celebrating Christmas without Jesus. Let us “glorify the LORD and rejoice in God our Savior”! Amen.