

## Order of Worship for December 19, 2021

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

**Opening Hymn:** *“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”* - Hymn # 340

**Confession and Forgiveness:** p. 203

### Service of the Word

#### Entrance Psalm:

P: My soul magnifies the Lord,

**C: and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.**

P: My mouth derides my enemies,

**C: because I rejoice in Your salvation.**

P: There is none holy like the LORD;

**C: there is none besides You; there is no rock like our God.**

P: The LORD kills and brings to life;

**C: He brings down and raises up.**

P: The LORD makes poor and makes rich;

**C: He brings low and he exalts.**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: My soul magnifies the Lord,

**C: and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.**

**Kyrie** (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 204

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

#### Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray...Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen**

**Choir:** *“Laudate Dominum (Psalm 117)”* - W.A. Mozart

**So-Yeoun Lee, soloist**

### **Old Testament Reading: Micah 5:2-5a**

R: But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore He shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of His brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And He shall stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they shall dwell secure, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth. And He shall be their peace.

R: This is the Word of the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Epistle: Hebrews 10:5-10**

R: Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then He added, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Alleluia and Verse: (p. 205)**

### **Holy Gospel: Luke 1:39-45**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter

**C: Glory to You, O Lord**

P: In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

### **Nicene Creed**

**Sermon Hymn:** *“The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came”* - **Hymn #356**

**Sermon:** *“The Fulfillment”* - **Luke 1:39-45**

Russian playwright Anton Chekov is considered one of the greatest writers in the world. Because of his fame, he was sought out for advice by younger playwrights. In one letter, he describes a principle now known as Chekov’s gun. “One must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn’t going to go off. It’s wrong to make promises you don’t mean to keep.” If a gun is placed in a scene, it must at some point be used. Putting extraneous details in a story that are never mentioned or used again create false promises. Foreshadowing should lead to fulfillment.

Throughout the Christmas story, we see that God follows that principle. We see all sorts of details from Old Testament prophecies and events in the history of the people of Israel that foreshadow the coming of Jesus at Christmas. More than that, we see the characters, Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and others, who see the promises made to them fulfilled before their eyes. It’s amazing how much fulfillment happens.

The part we focus on today is known as the Visitation, and features two women at different life stages, but who are both dealing with miraculous pregnancies and promises made to them. In Mary and Elizabeth, who believed, we see, first of all, that the promises of God were indeed from God and, second, that these promises would be fulfilled.

Mary has just received a momentous announcement. The angel Gabriel has appeared to her in person and declared that she will conceive and give birth to a son — and this will happen despite the fact that she is a virgin. Her first act upon receiving this news is to believe it, to trust that it will happen. Her next move is to go to the hill country of Judea, to a village where her cousin Elizabeth lives. Some six months earlier, Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah, had received some miraculous, barely believable news of their own: despite their long years of waiting for a child, a promise that seemed like it would never be fulfilled, Elizabeth, a woman well past childbearing age, would conceive and bear a son. And it has happened: Elizabeth is pregnant with a son, who would become the last and the greatest of the prophets of Israel, fulfilling prophecies of his own as the voice in the wilderness, John the Baptist.

After Gabriel leaves Mary, we are told that she “... went with haste.” She seems driven to visit her kinswoman. Mary knows of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. She knows how old Elizabeth is, so she knows this pregnancy must be miraculous. What better place to go, to share the incredible news she herself has just received? What better place to go to see another of God’s promises fulfilled? And, given what we know of Joseph’s reaction to her miraculous news, it was probably good she got out of town for a bit.

Elizabeth has seen the fulfillment of God’s promises. The angel Zechariah saw in the temple promised that they would have a child, even after their years of waiting for a child had seemed to be over. Yet here is Elizabeth, the proof of the fulfillment present in her visibly pregnant state. Mary too knows the fulfillment. Just a few short verses earlier, an angel had arrived and

given her a promise. She too carried the proof of that fulfillment in her womb, though no one could see that yet.

The promises made to them before are not the only things that are fulfilled. As these two women greet one another, prophecies and promises come tumbling from their mouths. Elizabeth calls Mary blessed as the baby John leaps in her womb. If we kept reading, we'd hear Mary sing the Magnificat, where Mary will testify to how God lifted her up in her lowliness. Not despite her lowliness, mind you, but in it.

But we're reminded why Mary is blessed. She believed the promises made to her. She believed the message of the angel that she was chosen by God to be the mother of God. She believed that Elizabeth had her own miraculous pregnancy. She believed the promises of God, and had seen one fulfilled already. That gave her the strength and courage to trust in the rest of the promises of God.

From their meeting would go on more promises fulfilled. John would be born, and his father Zechariah would get his voice back, fulfilling another promise. Mary would travel back to Nazareth, and she and Joseph would travel to Bethlehem, fulfilling yet another promise. As the story goes on, more and more promises would be fulfilled. Shepherds would find things just as the angels had told them. Wise men would find the promise of the star fulfilled, in the place where the prophets pointed. Jesus would be brought to the temple, fulfilling promises made to Simeon and Anna. On and on, the promises would be fulfilled.

One of the most famous stories of World War II is the story of General Douglas MacArthur, commander of US forces in the Philippines. Forced to retreat in the face of Japanese advances, MacArthur famously vowed to return. When he kept that promise and returned with liberating troops two years later, he said "I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil." General MacArthur kept his promise. His promise was fulfilled. General MacArthur's return didn't end the war, though. Many more battles would have to be fought, more people killed, before the enemies would be defeated. But their efforts were the first step in what would lead to victory.

Jesus' coming that first Christmas didn't end the war, either. The baby lying in a manger is the fulfillment of God's promises. Jesus was born to die for our sins, to begin God's work of fixing the world from all of the ways it's been broken by sin. His death on the cross defeated death once and for all, and saves us from our sins. But sin, death, and the devil don't realize they're defeated yet, and so we continue to struggle against them. Our war against sin, death, and the power of the devil continues. But we know that Jesus' second coming will end that war. When He comes again, He will "wipe away every tear," and there will be no more death or pain (Revelation 21:4), and everything will be fixed for good. God has promised to return, and we know God keeps His promises, and his promises will be fulfilled.

Christmas is not just the fulfillment of what we were waiting for. It is the promise that our waiting is not in vain. It's the fulfillment that shows us that all of God's other promises are worth holding onto, worth trusting.

As we wait for Christmas to come, we live in the same promises of Mary and Elizabeth. We have seen God's Word fulfilled among us, and trust that it will continue to be so. We trust that the same God who watched over Zechariah and Elizabeth in their years of waiting for a child, who watched Mary and Joseph as they watched the fulfillment of the promises made to them, will continue to watch over us as we wait for the day when promises are fulfilled, when sin and sorrow no longer grow, when thorns no longer infest the ground, when snow and ice and cold and wind no longer harm us.

The same God who has kept his promises in the Bible is the same God who keeps his promises today. The same God promises that in spite of our failings and fallings that he will hear us and bless us and direct us and keep us as his own. Through Jesus, because Jesus died and rose just as he said he would, you have been forgiven. That's a promise that has been kept.

### **Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

### **Service of the Sacrament**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, eternal God, for You sent Your Son Jesus into this world whose way John the Baptist announced to the world first as a bay in his mother Elizabeth's womb. Now You call us as John did to prepare the way for Christ's coming. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your Holy name, evermore praising you and singing . . .

**Sanctus** (*Holy, Holy Holy*) p. 208

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

P: We give thanks to You almighty God, everlasting Father, for You called Mary to be the mother of Your Son, Christ Jesus, our Savior. Bless us as we approach the altar of Jesus with the attitude of faith that Mary had and say, "Let it be to me as You command." Help us to share the joy of Elizabeth who recognized being in Christ's presence. Send Your Holy Spirit to that we believe that we receive the true body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins.

**C: Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer, The Words of our Lord, and Pax Domini** (*The Peace of the Lord*): p. 209

**Agnus Dei** (*Lamb of God*): p.210

**Distribution Hymns:**

**Choir:** "*Lift Thine Eyes*" - **Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy**

"*Once He Came in Blessing*" - **Hymn # 333**

"*Let All Mortal Flesh*" - **Hymn # 621**

**Dismissal**

**Nunc Dimittis:**(*Song of Simeon* ) p. 211

**Prayer After Communion:**

P: Lord Jesus come to us each day to bless us with Your presence. Send us into the world as those fed by Your true body and blood to make known to all that You came to take away our sins and will come again to end evil and dwell forever with your people. We pray this in Your most Holy name.

**C: Amen.**

**Benedicamus** ("Let Us Bless"), **and Benediction** (Blessing): p. 212

**Closing Hymn:** "*My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord*" - **Hymn # 934**

**Postlude**