

Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

Today, I am going to have a bit of a prologue before starting.

Often, when getting ready to write my sermon, some pop culture idea comes into my head and if possible, I use it to guide me in my writing and what I feel called to say. What kept coming to me before this Sunday was a 2004 movie called “Saved” produced by United Artist and directed by Brian Dannelly it starred many up-and-coming young stars of the day. It follows the life and times of a group of teens who attend a very conservative Christian High School. It’s the tale of a young girl who feels she has been given a vision from Jesus and the complications that the vision ends up causing. But I couldn’t figure out how to keep the solemnity of this last Sunday in

Advent and keep the humor of this film from making it a bit less solemn. But if you need a break this holiday season, put this movie on your watch list.

The first part of today's Gospel is sometimes referred to as the Visitation. When Mary who is with Child goes to visit Elizabeth. Some refer to Elizabeth as her cousin others believe she was actually Mary's Aunt. Here are two women in uniquely complicated situations. Mary is not married but with child and Elizabeth who by all purpose is beyond childbearing years is also with child. Both women must have been the talk of the town gossips because of their situations. And even as I am preparing this, I find myself using the euphemism of with child instead of pregnant.

In my research the fourth Sunday in Advent is often referred to as the Peace Sunday. That the fourth candle lit is referred to as the Angel candle as the Angels sing that Christ has come to bring peace to the world and to us.

And finally, the beautiful Song of Mary the Magnificat.

When Elizabeth child hears Mary's voice he leaped in her womb. He will be born to be John the Baptist. There are those who believe that it is at this moment that John the Baptist has been sanctified and will be born without original sin. It is a bit of foreshadowing about what these two children will become

and mean to each other. Do they or these mothers to be know how violently their lives will end?

I reflect on how difficult these days must be for these two women. And I wonder how difficult any time you are called by God, or one of his messengers must be. Is there always mess from dealing with a messenger? When we feel we have been called are we blessed as Elizabeth was and filled with the peace of the Holy Spirit? I have had moments when I have had that unusual feeling of love and peace has come over me whenever the feeling of angst, sadness, fear or what am I to do next to survive the current situation that has been around me. Sometimes it last for just a second or sometimes that feeling lingers but it is always something outside of my five senses and

something beyond what I can explain. It doesn't happen often but when it does it reminds me of God looking out for me and reminding me that the Divine is still nearby. As nearby as the coming of his birth.

Our lives are filled with all of the emotions and senses we have. Joy, sorrow, love, peace, trials, and tribulations. Life can be messy. But if I were called by a messenger or by the Divine to conduct his mission, would I have the strength to do so?

Yet here we have Elizabeth and Mary though human and dealing with all aspects of their human lives, find and have the strength to continue on and they greet each other with great joy. Whether with the help of the Divine or just in their own

strength as women, as soon to be mothers, as a wife and soon to be wife. To be mothers to two people who will become the ones of who we still look to today for our own strength thru the peaks and valleys of our lives. I wonder will God always bring me internal peace through the messiness of my living as he did to Elizabeth on that day and at that moment when she was filled with the Holy Spirit?

And after her long day of travel, after the recognition of the two spirits in each of their wombs and after the joy of their reunion Mary does a most remarkable thing and sings a song.

It could almost be considered radical for its time that a woman sings a song of universal truth. It is a woman that proclaims the first Christmas message.

And after the first line of the song, it is no longer about Mary as his lowly servant but tells the Kingdom of God breaking through systems of corruption, that he has not forgotten the poor and the hungry. That God has not forgotten the violence that we do to each other. That the Kingdom of God is for all of Gods people. That God will bring justice and peace back into our lives. It transcends the messiness of our life. It is her faithful acceptance from the moment Gabriel announces to her that she is to be the mother of God's son to this moment in time.

It isn't about whether she is worthy or unworthy. It is her understanding that it is not about her; it is all about God. Her song calls all of us, regardless of gender, race, class, social standing, sexual orientation, to avoid the traps of our own self-imposed limitation. That we are allowed to take the lids off of the jars of our lives and to be fully human and participate in the redemption of the world alongside Jesus Christ. She invites us to move past our limiting thoughts, but in our uniqueness to be God's presence and action in this world.

Mary is us if we are to be our true selves the ones that God has made us to be. Her song and strength invite each of us to recognize Christ in the bread and wine of the altar, to recognize

Christ in every neighbor and to remember to recognize Christ present in ourselves.

So as the angel candle is burning on this fourth Sunday of Advent the Sunday of peace it gives me a time to reflect. First the blessing of women of strength in my life. From Grandmothers, my mother, aunts, sisters, and friends and how their strength and ability to navigate the messiness of living has shaped and made me who I am. The significance of the fact that the new Bishop of Iowa is a woman, and we look forward to learning what song she will sing into our lives and this Diocese. I hope each of you can reflect on the Song of Mary. May our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord, our spirits rejoice in God our Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly

servants at New Song. For from this day may the Almighty continue to do great things for us and to bless generations to come with his gifts for holy is his name. My holiday wish is for each of you to find the way to peace in body, mind, and spirit as we come to the end of this Advent season.

And all of Gods Children say,

Amen