



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 22, 2024
4th Sunday in Advent

Pastor James Enderle

First Lesson: [Micah 5:2-5a](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 85a CW

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 10:5-10](#)

Gospel Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Luke 1:39-55](#)

A REAL CHRISTMAS STARTS WITH ADVENT A Real Christmas Will Lift up the Lowly THE LOWLY LIFTED UP

1. Lowly, but very _____.
2. Would the _____ call Mary _____?
3. The _____ are _____.
4. You can _____ for _____ because of Jesus.

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

I want you to consider who we lift up in our world today and not think about just me because who I lift up most often is this little one-year-old. She always raises her arms and wants me to lift her up. Some of you maybe have some of those little ones that want to be lifted up all the time. Think about in our world those who are in your face and kind of lifted up as people to follow, people to emulate. Celebrities, musicians, during the election where they try to get this artist/movie star, this person to sway people to vote because people like to follow what this celebrity says. Or maybe athletes are lifted up. They are in front of millions of people on TV and thousands of people go to see them play. Musicians have millions of people go to their concerts. I think even more bizarre today as people who are lifted up are reality TV show people who get on TV shows just to become famous and make money. Then they continually make a living and become famous just because they want to become famous. Or TikTok celebrities and YouTube personalities, these online personalities who are famous for what reason—we don't really know. Often they've been lifted up because they do silly things and they want to make a scene and they are sometimes obnoxious.

Are these the people who we lift up in our world today? Are we lifting up the right people in our world? What is that teaching our world? I think that's something to consider as we talk about those God is going to lift up. We look at our text and we see that **the lowly are lifted up**. This is what God is going to do and He does this in several different ways, but do we see that in our world? I'd say not really. We are going to talk more about that, about how God flips upside down who is exalted and who is brought down.

In our text we see who is talking. What is happening in this instance? We have Mary going to visit Elizabeth. Why is this all happening? It's the background of where the angel Gabriel has come to Mary and announced that she is pregnant. Here is this young girl who is told she is pregnant and she hasn't been with a man and she says "How can this be?!" It's not because she doubts but because it's normally impossible, but the angel explains that the Holy Spirit has come upon her and she is going to give birth to the Savior. It's pretty amazing. But to assure her of this, he tells her that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant. We know that from the verses before that an angel had appeared to Zechariah and told him of this; that Zechariah and Elizabeth had been waiting and waiting and waiting to have a baby but here they are. And Zechariah, in a different way, doubts. So Mary is told that Elizabeth is pregnant, and this is a shocker to her because she shouldn't be able to be pregnant. So Mary goes off to visit Elizabeth. We see this conversation. It says: ***When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"***

Again, I want you to think about the circumstances around all of this. We have two pregnant women and we are talking about two babies. It's not just two babies but two babies in the womb. How lowly in the sense at this time would this be? These aren't kings. These aren't men. These are two pregnant women and two babies that aren't even out talking and walking. I think an important thing that we look at is that we might see them as *lowly, but they are very important*, very, very important. This is what Elizabeth exclaims to Mary. Mary, as she goes to visit Elizabeth, understands how important this birth is going to be, the birth of John the Baptist. I want us to think a little bit about how important these lowly people are and to think in context of our world how important they maybe wouldn't be considered, because in today's world, just think about our society and how things have changed in the decades.

I know our church is somewhat unique. There are families here who have 12 brothers and sisters, 14 brothers and sisters, these huge, huge families. Isn't that something that was kind of an honored thing, to have a big family and to be a mother? Isn't that

something that was kind of honored? Now I feel in some ways if you have more than three kids/four kids/five kids, people kind of start to look at you and they're like "Woe! Do you know what you're doing?" We have this. A couple of weeks ago we heard "They must have a lot of money." We have four kids! But that's what people think, like it's almost unwise to have kids. Is it really looked upon highly to want to have kids? Instead, what is more encouraged is to have your career. What some of the rest of society says is "Should you even have kids. We have too many people in the world and it is better..." Some people question, "Should I even bring a kid into this world?" I think even at a smaller scale what is being talked about is two unborn children. One of the things that are not thought of as very highly in today's world is unborn children. Think about how this text has two women, one who is very young and one who is very old, both probably looked down upon and down cast, both speaking about unborn children. They are very lowly but very, very important and vital. They maybe were not the most respected in that culture, but what is fascinating is their faith and what brought about their faith.

We know that Zechariah might even be here in the distance, listening. He couldn't speak because he doubted the angel. But here we have Mary, who believed, even though what happened to Zechariah and Elizabeth was possible, just hard. But here Mary is a virgin and she believes that this could happen. Then here we have Elizabeth who speaks that the Holy Spirit fills her heart with joy to praise Mary. Not only this, she says, ***"^{A3} But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"*** Sometimes Christianity can be unfairly described to say it looks down on women, but here again Luke records the testimony of two women and their great faith. How amazing this is! But notice what is said about Mary over and over again in this section. It says: ***"Blessed is she who has believed... "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"*** And later Mary will say it again that all generations will call her blessed.

A question for you—*would the world call Mary blessed?* Of course Elizabeth does and we know through faith we call her blessed. In fact, Martin Luther says she is probably one of the most famous women in the world. Are there more famous women than Mary? Probably not, but take out the circumstances of knowing that she is the mother of the Savior and picture her having to flee or fleeing home while she is pregnant and then she is going to return home, pregnant, and she was engaged. But she comes home now pregnant. And here Joseph was a righteous man considering that he was going to divorce her quietly until the angel said "No, this is from God." How would you feel as a young couple, and would that look blessed to the world? Why is it important to talk about what the world would call blessed?

Here through faith, Mary and Elizabeth are speaking about how blessed Mary is to be the mother of the Savior. This is truly amazing. And the humility that Mary has when she sings here—she's not boasting about how great she is but that she has been picked

to carry the Savior. But often I think what the world sees as strife, as trouble, as danger, as burdensome can also be a blessing.

Do you see that in your life, that there are times when things come into your life and you can say "No, I'm blessed," but the world is looking at you like "Are you crazy? You're going through this thing and you think you're blessed?" It's true that God turns things upside down often. Unless you have faith, unless (as these women were) you are filled with the Holy Spirit and understand God's plan, that He is working out salvation, that we can take the suffering and the difficulties, then we can think there is nothing good that can come out of this. But knowing God's plan and being filled with faith, we can say we are blessed and know what God is bringing about.

I watched the Chief's game yesterday. A Houston receiver injured his knee pretty bad. What is fascinating is the quarterback for the Houston Texans is a very, very strong Christian and afterwards, in the press conference, his first 2-4 minutes were all a confession of how Jesus is there for that receiver. He wasn't talking about sports. He wasn't talking about what their team was going to do. He was only talking about how God was going to use this to bring this man closer to Jesus. Isn't that fascinating? I'm sure most of the reporters were like, "Why are talking about this? We want to know about your team and all these other things." But he was filled with understanding that this difficulty is what God was using—that God was going to bring blessing even through something hard.

You guys know life isn't easy. You know that you've been through difficulties or difficulties are coming but the Lord brings blessings and the Lord is going to bring you closer to trust in Him even when things seem hard or you don't see where things are going. This really gets to Mary's song.

As she glorifies the Lord and she rejoices in God, her Savior, she speaks about how God works. She says:

***⁵⁰ "His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.***

***⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.***

***⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.***

***⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty."***

Notice what the Lord does. He lifts up the lowly, but in doing that he also cast down someone. *The mighty are cast down.* Those who think they are wealthy. Those who think they are strong. They are humbled. God is flipping things upside down and

working in ways that the world doesn't. So a good question to think about is if God is bringing the mighty down, is that them or is that us? I think it's interesting to think about. Are we the lowly or are we the mighty?

In your circumstances, it's always interesting to think about this. I read this recently. Can you go a week without doing laundry and you still have tons and tons of clothes? Most of us could do that. We have so much stuff that we can probably go a week or two and say "Hey, I have more clothes." That seems like a small thing, but compared to other cultures or compared to others who are in need, it's an interesting thing to see.

I travel with Chinese people and when they would fly, they would wear the clothes that they were wearing. We'd be gone for 2-5 days and they'd have the clothes they were wearing and a backpack with one pair of clothes—very simple. If we are gone for three days, we have a huge suitcase. It's not meant to say that you can't do that, but in the realm of things, are we the mighty or the lowly? It's not just monetarily, but are we proud? It's a hard thing to say or to think because for different people and at different times, the answer is different. It's important to look at yourself and say "Are there times that I make myself the victim when I don't need to be; when I feel I have to be right when I don't need to be?" God has made you a victor, but so often we try to be the victim. Are we the lowly or the mighty? I think often we are filled with pride. Often we are filled with thinking we don't need others or we have it all together. Sometimes God brings us down. But it's in those times, in a time that we need to be brought down, that we find joy and we can really find refreshing.

Here Mary is lowly. She is this young woman who has been told she is going to give birth but she finds and rejoices in what? We see that as she sings, she sings about the grace that God brings. That He will be with His people. But then we see the miracle of what happens as she comes to Elizabeth. Hear what Elizabeth says. ⁴⁴ ***"As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.***

⁴⁵ ***Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"***

We see this beautiful thing that Elizabeth's baby leaps for joy—John the Baptist. What do we know is true? *You can leap for joy because of Jesus.* Why can John the Baptist do it, a baby still in the womb? It's because of the work of the Holy Spirit. God can work through ways that are unimaginable. God can bring faith. God can show love to the lowly, the ones that no one can see. What can work in your hearts and the hearts of others who are struggling to know God? He can work faith and joy. What brings this about is Jesus. As Mary was carrying the Savior, John the Baptist leaps with joy, just being in the presence of Jesus.

What a good message for Advent and Christmas. There are a lot of things that you're going to be doing in the next few days and weeks, a lot of things you can spend your time on, a lot of things that are going to fill you with joy and happiness. My prayer is what truly fills you with joy is Jesus, the birth of our Savior, the one who is going to

come and to be born, but then as we hear in Hebrews, to go to the cross and to be that sacrifice, to redeem you and to rise again. That means your sins are washed away. And if you feel lowly or mighty, my joy is that through joy in Jesus you can feel and know that you are redeemed. That's the greatest joy you can have. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.