

Third Sunday of Advent December 14, 2025

Introduction to the Day and its themes:

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as ‘rejoicing’ Sunday; the word in Latin is “*Gaudete*”. This is the Sunday we hear Mary’s joyous song that we call the *Magnificat* because God’s glory is magnified. The words of Frederick Buechner about come to mind. He says that happiness comes about when you expect it. Joy arrives at a most unexpected time. Much of Advent is about things that happen when we don’t expect them; like Gabriel appearing to the young Mary to tell her she was carrying with in her a baby who would be called “Emmanuel” God is with us. Today we hear her song as part of our liturgy and today might be a good day to think more about both the singer and the song.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Isaiah 35.1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. 3Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

5Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. 8A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they

shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Luke 1:46b-55

46b My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
47 my spirit rejoices in | God my Saviour,
48 **for you, Lord, have looked with favour on your | lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will | call me blessed:
49 you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me
and holy | is your name.
50 **You have mercy on | those who fear you,**
from generation to | generation. R
51 You have shown strength | with your arm
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,
52 **casting down the mighty | from their thrones**
and lifting | up the lowly.
53 You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.
54 **You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,**
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,
55 the promise made | to our forebears,
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever. **R**

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” 4 Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way before you.’
11 “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Some Reflections

Mary’s name in her language is Miriam, which literally means ‘she rebels’. You might remember another Miriam, sister to Moses. It was she who helped save her brother’s life and even arranged for him to be nursed and later adopted by the daughter of the the very ruler whose campaign of genocide was aimed at Miriam’s people. You might even recall a song Miriam sang when her people escaped Egypt via the Red Sea. Her song sings of military might, horse and rider pitched into the chaos of the churning waters. Miriam of the days of liberation sings just as Miriam, the one we call Mary sings of the deposing the powers that be and the poor being filled with good things.

Mary’s song sounds very much like another...the song of Hannah. Hannah grieved not having children and when a miracle baby was born, Hannah sang.

“My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my God.[\[a\]](#)
My mouth derides my enemies
because I rejoice in your victory.

2

There is no Holy One like the Lord,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

3

Talk no more so very proudly;
let not arrogance come from your mouth,
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.

4

The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.

5

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

6

The Lord kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

7

The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low; he also exalts.

8

He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honour.

For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and on them he has set the world.

9

He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked will perish in darkness,
for not by might does one prevail.

10

The Lord! His adversaries will be shattered;
the Most High[b] will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the power of his anointed.” (1Samuel chapter 2)

Do you see the connections between the woman's praise and her conviction that God upends things? It's as if God's thumb is on the scale, tipping it to restore justice for the poor and the victimized.

An frail old woman who inherits Hannah's name. She lives in the Temple where the baby Jesus is brought to be dedicated—just as young Samuel of long ago was dedicated when his mother brought him to the Temple to be consecrated by Eli.

The Hannah (Anna) who held Jesus also sang and though her words aren't written, we know she too sang of joy that comes unexpectedly and she sang of God's relentlessness in tipping things upside down to set them right to bring about wholeness and healing...or in a word that Miriam and Hannah would know... 'Shalom'.