

Don't You Know?

December 15, 2024 (3rd Sunday of Advent)

Isaiah 57:14-19

¹⁴ It shall be said,

“Build up, build up, prepare the way;
remove every obstruction from my people's way.”

¹⁵ For thus says the high and lofty one
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

I dwell in the high and holy place
and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble
and to revive the heart of the contrite.

¹⁶ For I will not continually accuse,
nor will I always be angry,
for then the spirits would grow faint before me,
even the souls that I have made.

¹⁷ Because of their wicked covetousness I was angry;
I struck them; I hid and was angry,
but they kept turning back to their own ways.

¹⁸ I have seen their ways, but I will heal them;
I will lead them and repay them with comfort,

¹⁹ creating for their mourners the fruit of the lips.

Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord,
and I will heal them.

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:1-4, 26-56

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³ I, too, decided, as one having a grasp of everything from the start, to write a well-ordered account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may have a firm grasp of the words in which you have been instructed.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a

son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;

⁵⁰ indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Please pray with me:

God be in our heads and in our understanding. God be in our eyes and in our looking.
God be in our mouths and in our speaking. God be in our hearts and in our thinking.

Tracy Chapman was just sixteen years old when she wrote the song, "Talkin' 'Bout a Revolution." She received a scholarship, transporting her from a public high school in Cleveland, Ohio, to a private boarding school in Danbury, Connecticut. It was a hard transition for a young black woman and Chapman grew angry at the lack understanding, and the lack of any desire to understand, what life was like for people like her.

The song begins:

*Don't you know...they're talking about a revolution?
It sounds like a whisper*

And then she tells the way it is:

*While they're standing in the welfare lines
Crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation
Wasting time in the unemployment lines
Sitting around waiting for a promotion*

She then announces:

Poor people gonna rise up and get their share.

Then, like Mary singing her revolutionary song, she announces good news:

'Cause finally the tables are starting to turn
Talkin' 'bout a revolution

She sings:

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

The way you hear her song, depends on your social location. A young woman from Syria will hear it much differently than a young woman with wealthy parents at a boarding school in Connecticut.

Don't you know? She's talkin about a revolution?

We have so twisted Christmas into a Hallmark movie that we don't even hear the whisper of Mary's revolution. We've made her meek and mild. We've draped her in

blue and made her passive and submissive. But Luke doesn't portray her that way. He presents her as a heroine. He gives her the title "Favored one." And out of the lips of Elizabeth he describes her as "Blessed among women." There are only two other women in scripture described in such a way. Jael and Judith. Both are warrior women, who in a time of conflict use the power they have as women to destroy the enemy. Jael was blessed among women and she pounded a tent peg through Sisera's skull after lulling him to sleep. Judith was blessed among women and beheaded an Assyrian commander named Holofernes after seducing him.

Mary is blessed among women as she boldly proclaims a new day dawning for those who are unseen, unheard, and undone. She rejoices in what God is doing through her. She sings about revolution. And then she births it.

It's good news for the ones *standing in the welfare lines and crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation. It's good news for the ones wasting time in the unemployment lines and sitting around waiting for a promotion.* It's good news for those who are crushed by poverty and crushed by violence and crushed in spirit. It's good news.

Don't you know – she's talkin' 'bout a revolution.

But what kind of revolution? How is this going to happen?

Will Jesus raise up an army? Will he lead a revolt? Will he call upon the wrath of God to destroy his enemies? Will Jesus use the playbook of every other tyrant ruler and greedy king, OR is there another way to turn this world around?

We get our answer in the wilderness, just before he begins his ministry. In the wilderness, Jesus is tempted by Satan.

Jesus resists the temptation of self-indulgence. Jesus resists the temptation of greatness and power. Jesus resists the temptation of self-serving religious identity. He resists everything Satan offers for a different kind of power, the revolutionary power of love. And it sounds like a whisper.

Don't you know – we're talkin' 'bout a revolution?

Mary resists the narrative assigned to her by her lowly, young, female status and steps into a new narrative – from now on, she declares, I will be called Blessed! Her soul feels its worth.

Jesus resists the world's understanding of greatness as he resists the temptations of power, control, fame, and might – in God's kingdom greatness is defined by service and humility.

And we resist hatred, and vengeance, and violence, and greed, and injustice, and apathy...because these are the things that keep us stuck in endless cycles of suffering and oppression.

Did you hear our choir singing 'bout a revolution:¹

We resist. We refuse to let hatred in. We rise up. We won't back down. We're in this til the end.

We resist...AND...we pray for our enemies. We welcome the stranger. We show love to our neighbor. We're in this til the end."

We resist AND we birth Christ in this time and this place.

We resist despair and we birth hope.

We resist greed and we birth generosity.

We resist judgement and we birth curiosity.

We resist hatred and we birth love.

We resist haughtiness and we birth humility

We resist apathy and we birth compassion

We resist injustice and we birth justice

We resist selfishness and we birth service

We resist unforgiveness and we birth grace

We resist fear and we birth joy

We resist the labels assigned to us telling us that we are nothing and we birth our voice.

Don't you know? We're talkin' 'bout a revolution.

Mary resists her lowly status and births a revolution.

A revolution of love, hope, joy, and peace, for all people!

"My soul magnifies the Lord," she sings! See what God has done! See what God is doing! See what God can do!

¹ We Resist by Mark Miller

Maybe we can find our song this Christmas – a song that gives us hope – a song that declares our worth – a song about the part we will play in God’s revolution of love.

Cause, “finally the tables are starting to turn....”

We rise up. We won’t back down. We’re in this til the end.