Morning Devotional

Diocesan Center

May 16, 2023

**Pray** Psalm 113

Sing praises to the Beloved of all hearts!

 Sing praises, all you who would honor Love,

 sing praises to the Architect of the universe!

Bless the Holy One from this time forth

and forever more!

Aspire to know the Unknowable,

 to enter fully into the Great Mystery,

 to be fertile ground to the Heart-seed of Love.

Aspire to gifts of the Spirit,

 be open to Grace and express gratitude!

Who is like the Blessed One,

 the One who is Infinite Love, Power, and Wisdom,

Who enters into human hearts

 and brings comfort to those in need?

Yes, those who call upon the Merciful One,

 are lifted up and blessed with new life;

They wear a crown of joy,

 as they recognize their Oneness with Spirit.

Come, all who suffer and are heavy-laden,

 open your hearts to Love!

Sing praises to the Heart of all hearts!

**Read** *Luke 1:39-45*

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

**Reflect**

“She arose in haste and went into the hill country.” The reason for the haste is not given, but the threat, the innuendo is there. Girls in many cultures for the last five thousand years or so are taught to view pregnancy outside of publicly controlled and sanctioned situations with the utmost fear. In many places and times a woman’s entire life and destiny hung upon her fertility being legally owned and controlled by a man. Death, exile or perhaps even worse – marriage to her rapist – were the legal consequences for a woman pregnant outside the marriage contract.

“She arose in haste and went into the hill country.” It seems as though the jig is up for Mary and the local machinery has been set in motion to deal with her crime. I imagine her, heart pounding, realizing she must do something, go somewhere. Did she pray in the garden where first she heard Gabriel’s voice, did she pray, into the yawning silence and hear only her own breath echoing back? There is no intervening angel here, no dream, no help.

She does not go to the authorities to tell of her vision, her experience, her epiphany of God. She heads to the hill country, alone.

How is it that the danger and the aloneness of Mary is met with silence on our part? In the wake of centuries of biblical study and theology caroling about the fruit of Mary’s womb, or Mary as holy flower pot, of immaculate conceptions, womanly meekness, Mary’s meditative and circumspect silences, her surrender to God, or being the “handmaiden” of the Lord, we’ve lost sight of the young woman, setting her face towards Judah, without any direction that we know of, in order that God’s will be done. There’s no record of any miracle that intervened on her behalf, no enigmatic stranger writing in the sand to come between her and the accusers that have begun to close in about her. No, she arose, alone and went with haste, no one can bear this burden, drink this cup but she alone. From and through the very cultural traditions that would shame and kill her, God will create freedom for Mary, for us. Maybe we lost sight of her because she was so far ahead of us.

*Excerpts from her sermon*

*by The Rev. Claire Woodley-Aitchison*

*You are invited to share your thoughts regarding these readings.*

**Music**

We Stand Together from Uplifitng Stories

by Christopher Salt and John Rowcroft

**Pray**

We thank you Lord for granting us strength and grace

sufficient for the number of our days;

be with us as we move through the unfolding of our time

in humble obedience to your will,

in sensitivity to your Spirit,

and in joyful expectation of your kingdom.

Illuminate our hearts, our paths, and our vision

as we go along Your Way. Amen.

**Sources**

*Opening Prayer: Psalms for Praying,* © 2007 Nan C. Merrill

*Closing Prayer: adapted from The Hours: Midday, Every Moment Holy Volume I,* © 2019 *Douglas McKelvey*