

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (December 12, 2021)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

At the heart of the Christmas story is a re-working and re-defining of power, privilege, and priorities. God did not take the expected route of power. Instead, He chose a poor, common, unmarried girl named Mary to give birth to the world's Savior. Jesus' supposed father was a day laborer. Even His country, the nation of Israel, was powerless, having been beaten, overrun, humiliated, and subjugated, by Rome. God did not take the typical route of privilege. He did not reserve the palace for His arrival as king. Instead, a stable, likely filled with animals, and odd smells, served as the delivery room. The new parents paid the poor man's fee when their son Jesus was dedicated in the Temple.

God upended the priorities of that day, our day too. He did not come into this world to raise an army and claim a throne. He did not seek financial gain. He did not respond to flattery. Instead, He came to serve and save those who had rejected Him. His priorities were always people, relationships, love not fame, fortune, and applause. In the Christmas story we discover we do not need power or privilege. Love is enough. When we understand that our priorities change. God's way is the way of Joy. Mary filled with the Holy Spirit of God could not contain her joy and amazement. She broke into song ... "My Soul magnifies the Lord ... He has looked on the humble estate of His servant ... He has scattered the proud ... brought down the mighty ... sent away the rich hungry ..."

Mary's heart and mind were so full of Joy that she, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, reminded us in today's Bible passage of God's priorities which led Him to the cross. It led Him to us.

That's why Mary sang. That's why here at Grace we sing too.

Mary's Song of Justice & Joy 3rd Sunday in Advent Joy (Luke 1:46-56)

⁴⁶ And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And 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 thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones

and exalted those of humble estate;

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

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.'

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

What Does it Say?

1. As you read Mary's song what does it tell you about God's character and God's priorities? Read also Matthew 5:1-12.
2. What do these verses say about God's work in the lives of those who are considered proud and powerful? Read also James 1:9-11, 5:1-6 and Jeremiah 17:11.
3. What does this passage say about God's plans for the future, our future? What matters most to God?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does Mary mean when she sings, "all generations will call me blessed"?
5. What words does Mary use to describe who God is?
6. What does Mary mean when she sings of God's work with: 1) the proud, 2) those on thrones, 3) those satisfied and rich?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Do you consider yourself poor, or do you consider yourself rich? Is the birth of Jesus good news for the rich? Explain. Is the birth of Jesus good news for the poor? Explain.
8. Who is the most important and powerful person you know? What makes them important? Do you consider Mary blessed?
9. What will ultimately happen to all your riches, your stuff? How does your understanding of what lasts and what matters help you set priorities for your life? What are 3 of your priorities?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you understand His priorities. Ask God to help you accept His definition of power. Ask God to help you live to love and serve Him and others. God loves you and He will help you.