



Nothing is impossible with God (and no, not just for Vikings fans)

Pastor John Klawiter

December 18, 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:47-55

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

It's a new way for us to hear the song of Mary—or, as the First Nations Bible calls her, Bitter Tears.

Mary, who in Hebrew, means “Bitter”, might more appropriate for the end of Jesus life—actually could be a justifiable response to her initial news at hearing what the angel tells her to expect.

I was drawn to this reading through a conversation with Nina back in the summer—she had heard about this translation of the Bible and a friend had shared this passage.

Mary, Bitter Tears, says “my heart dances with joy to honor the Great Spirit.”

But hold up.

Dancing, Joy, Singing, Gleeful delight. That's NOT Mary's first response.

When hearing the news from an angel that she will bear the Messiah, Mary is perplexed. She's told to not be afraid. She is full of questions. Like “how will this happen?”

The angel says the Holy Spirit—the Great Spirit—will birth the son of God. AND, her relative, Elizabeth, will bear a son in her old age. Not one miracle, but TWO, births are foretold.

Finally, the angel says, “for nothing will be impossible with God.”

Vikings fans (first half score), I know it feels like it, but this angel is not talking about you. (rest of the slide)

Nothing will be impossible with God (slide of the verse).

This is what Mary needs to hear. It affirms that this message can be true.

Yes, she's scared. Yes, the world will react strongly when this son of God is born.

Yes, Mary knows that the journey will not be an easy one.

But, she says “Here am I, the servant of the LORD, let it be with me according to your word.”



It's when Mary and Elizabeth talk that the gravity of this situation sinks in. Elizabeth also affirms the news. This child, soon to be born, is a blessing to Mary. AND, Elizabeth says something striking:

Blessed is she, Mary, who believed in the fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the LORD.

Then, Mary's heart dances with joy to honor the Great Spirit.

Joy is not always the first and immediate response when we receive news, is it? When facing challenging circumstances in work, in parenting, in health, in retirement planning, in family dynamics like arranging care for a relative—whatever it is—joy is not always our default.

Stress, fear, anger, feelings of unfairness... all of these responses are normal and justified. Mary might have had a mixture of ALL of those.

Yet, after taking it all in—and pondering in her heart the meaning of these words, Mary responds with joy. **(SLIDE of Luke 1)**

And she sings boldly.

Or someone sings.

What we attribute as Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, had one of the most fascinating footnotes. Click on that foot note and you get this:

FOOTNOTE other ancient authorities read Elizabeth

I think this interpretation is rarely acknowledged because, in the flow of conversation, it makes more sense that Mary is singing, but that's what makes this so fascinating to me.

Because the song of praise doesn't matter if it's sung by Mary... or Elizabeth. As someone shared at Women of Wisdom, you could just as easily leave that blank and fill in your own name.

It's a song that we could all sing. It's a statement of belief—much like Owen and Devin affirming their baptism today—this is an affirmation that God is totally, completely, and whole-heartedly in charge.

Who are we to question? Who are we to fear?

What do we need to proclaim today? What good news are we ignoring? Are we allowing the weight of our expectations or the expectations of others to squash us?

Mary, through bitter tears, sings for joy when she recognizes that she has been blessed.



We are blessed.

And so, we respond with joy. With dancing in our hearts. We respond with faith.

Whether that's a warm blanket for a neighbor sleeping in the snow. Singing Christmas carols with friends in a senior care residence. Sharing presents with Toys for Tots. Helping a neighbor shovel or plow out their driveway.

If you wanna be an Ebenezer Scrooge about how selfish our world is, maybe we aren't looking in the right places.

I see God's abundant love being shared, all around us. That's the story to share... whether spoken, sung, or in silent acts of compassion. Amen.