

Thought For The Day Advent 20th December  
Recognition



Luke 1: 39-45

Mary Visits Elizabeth

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 leapt 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 leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Thought: Recognition

Today's picture in Luke's first chapter comes between the great announcement to Mary that she will bear the infant Jesus and her exceptional song of praise which we will hear tomorrow. Here is an all very human account of what happens in between. Extraordinary things are taking place and they need to be checked out.

So today's picture is a gateway to a different possibility. Life is being changed forever. It's about Mary recognising this indescribable truth at work inside her. It is about that swell of sheer joy when something in the core of our being touches someone else in the core of their being. Only the closest of people can share this. It becomes an echo of God's eternal harmony. We pick up the tune and we long to sing it because someone else has seen that it is real!

In her inner turmoil Mary knows exactly who she can trust. The two women know each other so well that they see each other truly. Mary believes that Elizabeth will somehow understand - she will accept her condition without raised eyebrows and will give her space while she thinks things through. Elizabeth has also been chosen by God to carry a special child. Mary has a deep respect for Elizabeth. Elizabeth in turn looks at Mary with eyes of love and also awe that she should be trusted in this way by the mother of the coming Saviour.

Deep in Elizabeth's womb John leaps with anticipation too! Babies in the womb do kick, of course. They recognise voices and music. So even here there is a recognition of the immensity of all this.

Everyone here in the deep intimacy of this encounter is recognising God at work. This is not just a historical story about two extraordinary women. It's a picture of what happens whenever people meet each other with truly open hearts and let God in. The leap of the heart towards the heart of the other is a sign of true "soul friendship."

So the scene is set for all that is to follow. Love coming down at Christmas begins with the love of these two women for their children. Elizabeth with her longed for baby coming late in life. Mary is here with her hopes and dreams, hardly more than a child herself.

The older women and the young girl together see the wonder of the God who is at work deep inside them overturning the powers that are doubtless at work for both of them. People with their hard eyes and their harsh judgements - with their false respect for wealth and their contempt for the poor and the ordinary. The two women draw real comfort and strength from each other as they see all this.

As we come towards Christmas Day we remember all those who have said yes to God and still do today.

May God show us how to say yes in our own lives and point us to the people we can trust to work out what this means.

A prayer.

Great God, laughter swells inside us.

Joy and wonder overflow.

You are at work in all this -

A child growing like countless others before and since.

You are at work to save, to bless, to rescue.

Your love is so tender and yet so strong, Holy God.

Open our hearts to receive you in the depth of our being, Lord

And show us who we can share this with through this season and forever.

Amen

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