

12.19.21 A4 Jesus Will Change the World with God's Long View

- When you are excited about something happening in the future, it often seems like you have to wait forever until that good day finally comes
 - So when you were young, and you were waiting for Christmas, didn't it seem like Christmas would never come?
 - Or when you went to school, and you were in elementary, or middle school, or high school, didn't it seem like your graduation would never come?
 - And then you got a job, and the first payment was either put in your pension account, or you made your first payment into your IRA, didn't retirement seem like it was a long way away?
- It seems like we have to wait forever for some good things to come finally arrive
- But the same can be said about the bad things too, right?
 - If you are struggling at school or at work or in life, that struggle can seem like it goes on and on
 - When you are standing by, supporting, or caring for someone who has a lingering disease like Alzheimer's, the days can seem like they last forever – in fact, a widely read book about dementia is even entitled The 36 Hour Day
 - And of course the big wait right now is the pandemic – it seems like it has raged forever with all kinds of twists and turns, but the Covid mess is not yet even two years old
- With many good things, or many bad things, time slows down. Time sometimes even seems to stop and stand still.
- And yet in the gospel reading for today, the magnificent song of Mary, we hear not just the words of a young expectant mother – we hear the words of an inspired prophet and visionary
 - Yes, Mary was expecting a baby, but she was looking way beyond his birth
 - Mary was looking far beyond his life
 - Mary was looking even far beyond OUR lives
 - Mary was looking into God's future, *and what she saw with visionary eyes was THE LONG VIEW*

- THE LONG VIEW is that despite the events of the present day in our lives and in our world, God has been at work in Jesus Christ to change things
 - Despite living in a land occupied, oppressed, and ruled by the powerful Roman army, Mary saw that in the long view, God would use his strength to scatter the proud and arrogant people of the world
 - Despite the world around her, Mary saw that in God's Kingdom, the powerful rulers would be toppled from their thrones and the lowly people would be raised up and treasured by God
 - Despite the widespread bare existence of her day, Mary saw that in God's Kingdom, the hungry would be fed, and the rich would be sent away empty
 - AND Mary *did not yet know*, but a few years later, she would see through a flood of tears that her son would be put to death on the cross, and then she would see God raise her son from the grave
 - And now together with Mary – together with her we hear through the promise of the Good News of Jesus Christ, that in the long view, God uses forgiveness and life to bring us to forgiven lives both now, and even beyond death
- Mary's song is a song of hope – a song that in tough and difficult days when time seems to slow down, or even when time seems to stop, through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, God changes not just our lives, but God has already begun to change the world
- As we prepare to celebrate Christmas – not so much the Christmas of presents, and food, and family – but rather as we prepare to celebrate Jesus Christ being born into the world, we need to hear and share Mary's hope in God's future
 - We need to hear, in the midst of such a nasty and prolonged pandemic, that the chaos of Covid will not last forever, even though it seems SO LONG
 - We need to hear, not just in the face of such a public pandemic, that in our personal, and sometimes in our private struggles that are so deep that few if anyone else even knows about them, that the stuff that keeps us awake at night does NOT last forever – instead, each one

- of us needs to know, and sometimes perhaps we only cling by our fingernails to Mary's vision, that God is beginning to change the world, God is beginning to undermine the proud, God is at work to subdue suffering, and God has already promised that death will not get the last word
- And of course, not only do WE need this hope, *but the rest of the world also needs Mary's prophetic word of hope*
 - The pandemic is so bad that it is easy to become numb – numb to the pandemic, and numb to everything and everyone else
 - So not only do we need to echo Mary's prophetic words to the world, but our words can also be put into action
 - If God is going to feed the hungry, let's rejoice that our local food pantry provided extra food this month to over 200 families who are struggling to make ends meet
 - If God is going to feed the hungry, in the meantime God uses us to put simple, easy-to-open-without-a-can-opener-food out in our Little Free Pantry for the hidden homeless people who can stop by anytime time, day or night, for ready-to-eat food
 - If God is going to take care of the poor, then God uses us to make thousands of free diapers for young children and incontinent adults available, for people who otherwise might have had to skip a meal to afford them
 - And if God lifts up the lowly, it is hard to be lower than to have your home literally blown away in the Midwest, so governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers, church relief partners and our Lutheran Disaster Response, and many more responders have been converging to comfort, shelter, and restore the lives of people ravaged by tornadoes just nine day ago
 - Yes, time can drag, and time can even seem to stand still, but Mary reminds us that God is NEVER still. It may take time, it may be the long view, but God is working – sometimes even through us – God has begun to change the world
 - And in the meantime, as people who have been given this hope, we can join Mary's song, and magnify and sing praise to the God who has sent Jesus, the Savior to us.