

THE VISITATION

(Luke 1:39-45)

Luke 1:39-45, 56

The Visitation

The story of the visitation is a woman's story. Two unknown and seemingly ordinary women of the first century meet during their pregnancies for mutual support. Mary the younger one, just pregnant with her first child, goes to the older woman who is in a similar condition. It misses Luke's intent if Mary is presented simply as rushing to aid Elizabeth in her pregnancy. The focus seems to be on the two mothers-to-be coming together to praise the marvelous activity of God in both their lives. Elizabeth's child, John, leaps in his mother's womb as Mary greets Elizabeth. He is the one who will prepare people to recognize and receive the promised one. Elizabeth, whom we are told is filled with the Holy Spirit responds by telling Mary that she is blessed and the child in her womb is blessed. Elizabeth praises Mary for trusting in God. Elizabeth's words point to Mary as the model believer. The writer here is underscoring his jubilee theme that the blessing of God is poured out on ordinary, even unlikely people. In this case, one who appears too old and one who is very young.

Luke 1:46-56

Mary's prayer – the Magnificat – My Soul Glorifies the Lord

The context of Mary's prayer is the visitation - Mary visiting her elderly cousin Elizabeth who, like herself, is also pregnant: two women sharing women's business. The prayer of Mary is very similar to Hannah's prayer in the First Book of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-10). Hannah after years of waiting had finally conceived and given birth to a son. Her joy is like Mary's joy here; rejoicing in the goodness of God to the poor, the lowly, the little ones. The Magnificat is full of other Old Testament references from the prophet Habbakuk, the Psalms and the Book of Job. It is a prayer in keeping with the Old Testament and the themes of the Gospel of abundance for all, especially the poor.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Beige felt underlay
- Brown felt road
- 3 D Figures: Mary and pregnant Elizabeth
- Bible

Children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story. When the children are ready carry the materials carefully from the story shelf to the story area and place beside you and say

Place class Bible, open at Luke, in front of you with your hand on it.

This story comes from the Gospel according to Luke, which is in the New Testament section of the Bible.

Place Bible beside you.

Lay underlay and then the road. Place Mary on the road near you. Place Elizabeth at the opposite end of the underlay, to the side of the road.

Move Mary along the road as you say:

Mary left her home in Nazareth and travelled in haste to the hill country of Judea. She was going to visit her relative, Elizabeth who lived with her husband, Zechariah.

Move Mary off the road just a little way and say

Upon entering the house of Zechariah, Mary greeted Elizabeth.

Move Elizabeth towards Mary.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby within her moved.

Place your hand over Mary as you say:

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Mary, blessed are you among women! And blessed is the baby growing within you!"

Place your hand behind Elizabeth as you say:

"I cannot believe that the mother of my Lord would visit me!"

Place your hand over Mary's head and say:

"Blessed are you Mary, because you believed the angel's message and you faithfully trust in God!"

Pause for a while before wondering with the students.

I wonder...

I wonder why Mary would have gone to visit her relative, Elizabeth.

I wonder why Elizabeth's baby moved when Mary greeted Elizabeth.

I wonder how Elizabeth knew Mary was going to have such a special child.

I wonder what the women talked about.

I wonder if you find anything puzzling or amazing in this story.

