

## LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS ADVENT 4B

The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

**2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:1-11,16**

**Canticle 15 *The Song of Mary* Luke 1:46-55**

**Romans 16:25-27**

**Luke 1:26-38**

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God has been good to David. God has granted David victory in battle, and now he is entitled to rest. He understands that the source of his success is God and he wants to do something for God. God has been traveling with them in an ark in a tent. David wants to construct a temple for God, a permanent residence. He consults with the prophet Nathan who gives his blessing. Later, however, God tells Nathan to tell David instead what He (God) will do for David. He reminds David that he took him from being a shepherd and made him a prince. He reminds David that He is constantly present with him. God promises David some things also – that God will make for him a great name, that Israel will live in its own appointed place and will be well planted, that they will have rest from their enemies and be disturbed no more, that David's house and kingdom will be established forever. So God's promise is not about His own house, but about the house that He will provide for David and Israel.

***Very often we think we can do for God as if we could give God what He needs. Such an understanding of being able to provide for God's needs limits God in a way that is not realistic. It is not about what we can do for God, because God does not need us to do anything for Him. It is more about what God can do for us. Advent is about accepting the limitless possibilities of what God can and wants to give us. With what gifts is God trying to bless you now? What is it that you are trying to do out of your own efforts that is preventing your receiving of God's gift to you?***

**Canticle 15 *The Song of Mary* Luke 1:46-55**

This beautiful canticle should be well known to those who read the Daily Office as it is appointed for Evening Prayer. This is the song that Mary sings during her visitation to Elizabeth after Elizabeth acknowledges the blessedness of Mary and the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus. This song is about spiritual opposites – about how up is down, the mighty are made weak, the hungry are made full, the proud are cast down. The entrance of Christ into the world turns everything upside down. The spiritual journey is definitely about moving downward. We should look down and not up – looking down shows us the face of the poor which is where we see Christ. If we are self-absorbed and self-centered, we have great difficulty looking down to the least of these. Mary understood this. Her unique humility enabled her to look down and find the grace of God in order to bear the Son of God into the world.

***Where do you see the face of Christ? What enables you to look away from yourself and down into the face of those less fortunate than you? What enables you then to respond to their need? How can you, like Mary, say yes?***

### **Romans 16:25-27**

This is the final doxology of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. It is a hymn of praise to the one true God. This hymn of praise reminds us of who God is. He is the God who can strengthen, the one who can proclaim and reveal the Christ who will bring about the obedience of all. He is the only wise God who is able to do anything.

***Are you in touch with God's wisdom and God's ability to reveal Christ in your world? How is Christ disclosed to you? What do you need that God's wisdom and strength can provide?***

### **Luke 1:26-38**

We know this reading as "The Annunciation." This is a description of a profound announcement – probably the most profound announcement ever made. I wonder sometimes what Mary was doing when the angel Gabriel intruded into her world. She was a simple girl, no one special really...a young girl, maybe not even more than 14 or 15. Was she praying when Gabriel came? Or was she going about doing her daily household chores? Did she expect such a visitor, or was Gabriel a surprise? When he made himself known and told her not to be afraid, did she pause in her tracks to talk to him or did she keep doing what she was doing? We are told that she was perplexed by his greeting, calling her the favored one. Her perplexity likely caused her to stop to consider more closely what he was saying. When the angel explains that she is going to become pregnant with the Son of God, Mary asks how this can be. Either she is asking a question about biology or about theology. Does she want to know how physically this can happen or how it can happen spiritually? Very often we in our dualistic world pit Science against Theology. Gabriel's answer doesn't necessarily explain the Science of what is about to happen to Mary, but it does explain a spiritual process. The Holy Spirit will come upon Mary and the Most High will overshadow her. Being overshadowed certainly implies a potential loss of identity. If one is overshadowed, one's essence recedes into the darkness and ambiguity. But then the angel explains about what is happening to Mary's cousin Elizabeth – she who was barren is now six months pregnant! Nothing is impossible with **God**, Gabriel explains. Even though Mary will be overshadowed, instead of losing her identity, she will gain her identity in a much more powerful way – **as the Mother of God!** Now technically Gabriel didn't ask Mary's permission for this plan, but Mary submits to it anyway: "Let it be to me according to your word."

***What would it be like to submit to God as if He were completely overshadowing you? Would you lose yourself or would you find yourself in a more completely full way? Are there things in your own life that you find impossible? Can you imagine that they might become possible with God? What angels are visiting you and bringing you a word of possibility? Can God REALLY do something great for you? Can you "let it be?"***

### **COLLECT:**

***Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.***