

blessed

Mary, pregnant with Jesus, has left her home and gone to be with her older cousin Elizabeth, who happens to also be pregnant with John the Baptist (Luke 1:39-55). I tend to think that Mary comes to the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah to seek refuge from the her own small-town life where being an unwed pregnant woman would have gotten difficult. She does not come timidly though, for she bursts out in song, singing the Magnificat; a song based on some of the great songs of the Hebrew Bible, which regails us with the reminder of God's heart for the least of those among us.

In Hebrews today (Hebrews 10:5-10), a New Testament sermon by an unknown author, we hear that the coming of Christ fundamentally shifts the relationship with God and God's People, especially regarding the cultic practice of sacrifice. No longer do the bodies of animals need to be offered, for it's Jesus' body that is offered to us; first in the manger, then on the cross.

The Book of the Prophet Micah (Micah 5:2-5a) is not a particularly happy one. Micah had harsh words for a people who were living in sin and forsaking their covenant relationship with God. But, in one of the more tender sections of Micah's writing we find God's plan to come forth from an insignificant town which was part of a small clan. Micah warns his readers of all that will befall them if they do not walk in the ways of God, but he also comforts them with the image of a shepherd-God who will stand and tend to his flock.

Call and Response

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
God has come to the help of his servant,
For he has remembered his promise of mercy.
The promise he made to our forebearers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

(Adapted from the Magnificat)

Discussion and Question

Put yourself in Mary's shoes. What would it have been like for her? What might she have been feeling? If you were Elizabeth and Zechariah greeting her at your door, what would you say to her? How would you take care of her?

Prayer

Gracious God, in sending your son among us, you have shown the strength of your arm. As you sent your son to Bethlehem in ages past, we pray you to send your son to us today, that we might proclaim your greatness, and that our spirit may rejoice. Amen.