

Wednesday 31 May 2023

The visit of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth



Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth is recorded in Luke's gospel.

This feast was first celebrated at a Franciscan Order General Chapter in 1263 but spread quickly throughout Europe. It clearly describes an event in the gospel so many of the reformed did not ban it, particularly as it showed Mary singing her great hymn of praise in honour of her Lord and God.

Just as Luke sees John the Baptist as the last of the prophets of the old covenant, he uses John's leaping in Elizabeth's womb as the first time John bears witness to Christ as the promised Messiah. He thereby links the old covenant with the new and seems to say that just as the old covenant clearly points to Jesus, so does its last prophet, yet to be born.

Sermon © The Revd Denise Owen.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [Tell out my soul](#)
[Tell out my soul](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)
(modern version)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All **Amen.**

The Lord be with you

All **And also with you.**

The Preparation

All **Almighty God,**
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the visit of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth

Almighty God,
by whose grace Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary
and greeted her as the mother of the Lord:
look with favour on your lowly servants
that, with Mary, we may magnify your holy name
and rejoice to acclaim her Son our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of the Prophet Zephaniah

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. *Zephaniah 3:14-18*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be

ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Romans 12:9-16

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Magnificat (Taizé)

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Magnificat (Gregorian chant)

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

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 leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessèd are you among women, and blessèd 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 leaped for joy. And blessèd is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessèd; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'

Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Luke 1:39-56

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Did you look at the picture on the first page of this transcript? It is a beautiful image of Mary and Elizabeth greeting each other. The as yet unborn John and Jesus are visible amid the folds of the women's clothes; Jesus holds up a hand in a sign of blessing, John is kneeling in prayer, a foretaste of what is to come. There is a gentleness to the gestures the women are making and could we read a sense of intimacy and understanding into the scene?

Now go back and read the gospel for today; the words that describe this meeting. They are words of joy and wonder, words of humility and confidence. These women know that they are carrying incredibly special babies, children who will grow into men who have a unique place in God's plan for the salvation of humankind, and Jesus will change the world forever. At this point, those amazing events are still in the future, of course, and as much as Mary and Elizabeth know that their children have been given to them by God, they are still two women who are pregnant and will spend the next years caring for their sons—just as parents have done for millennia. It hardly needs saying that this must be a strange and unsettling time for both of them, so for them to be able to spend time together must have been a great comfort.

There are many lessons for us as Christians from this lovely story: rejoice and praise God as Mary and Elizabeth did; be open to saying 'Yes' as Mary did; share in each other's joys and sorrows; and perhaps most of all trust God. Mary and Elizabeth had extraordinary starts to their pregnancies of course, but as their children grew they did what all parents do every day: fed and taught, put their sons to bed, comforted them when they fell over and scraped a knee, perhaps even told them off now and again. This is a reminder that the Christian life is mostly lived out in unspectacular ways. It is lived in the day-to-day routines of ordinary life, doing what almost everybody does on a daily basis. Yet, we do all of those 'ordinary' things with the knowledge that God is with us. We do them with the knowledge that the Son of God, Mary's Son, died for us and rose again, and that he sent the Holy Spirit to live in us. This is the ultimate miracle, the event that underlies all the other ordinary events; the miracle that makes all of life miraculous. This seems to me to be a long way from two women who are carrying children greeting each other in mutual affection. And yet...

No doubt Mary and Elizabeth as they were bringing up their sons now and again looked back and recalled the circumstances of their conception and thanked God, but also wondered where it was leading. They trusted that God would reveal God's purpose, although I doubt if they had a clear understanding of what God was doing.

We do know what God was and is doing, bringing salvation to humankind, bringing light and life to the world. It is the knowledge of God's saving grace which illuminates our lives and gives the possibility of joy to daily life and actions. We should with Mary 'Magnify the Lord' each day and give thanks for what God has done. Amen

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Let us proclaim the greatness of the Lord
and rejoice together in the God who saves us.

Lord, you do great things for us:

All Holy is your name.

You have mercy on those who fear you in every generation.

We pray for your Church ...

Lord, you do great things for us:

All Holy is your name.

You show the strength of your arm
and cast down the mighty from their thrones.
We pray for the nations of the world and their leaders ...
Lord, you do great things for us:

All Holy is your name.

You lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things.
We pray for all those in any kind of need ...
Lord, you do great things for us:

All Holy is your name.

You come to the aid of your servants
and remember your promises with mercy.
We remember ... and all who have died in the faith of Christ.
Bring us with them to share the joy of heaven
with Mary and all the saints.
Lord, you do great things for us:

All Holy is your name.

Father most holy,
so guide us in the way of humility and obedience like Mary,
that our lives may be a constant hymn of praise
to you from whom all good things come.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Steadfast love and faithfulness have met;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 **Magnificat**

(J S Bach)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May God who sent Mary to visit Elizabeth
to share with her the joy of the divine plan,
give you grace to tell out the good news of Christ.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 **Magnificat**

(contemporary hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
almighty Father, ever-living God,
to proclaim the wonders you have worked in all your saints,
and on this feast of Mary, ever blessed,
to echo her praise of your loving kindness.
For you have truly done great things
and holy is your name,
and your mercy is on those who fear you
in every generation.
When you looked with favour on your lowly servant
you remembered your promise of mercy
and gave the world through her
your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Through him the hosts of heaven adore you
and rejoice in your presence for ever.
May our voices join with theirs
in the triumphant hymn of praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Mary, Elizabeth and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God,
who gave joy to Elizabeth and Mary
as they recognised the signs of redemption
at work within them:
help us, who have shared in the joy of this eucharist,
to know the Lord deep within us
and his love shining out in our lives,
that the world may rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work

to your praise and glory.

Amen.