

Politics and Revolution at Christmas

Thomas Robinson, *Advent for Grown-ups* 3, December 11, 2011

Luke 1:39-55

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!*" ⁴³ *But why am I so favored, that **the mother of my Lord** should come to me?* ⁴⁴ *As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.* ⁴⁵ *Blessed is **she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!***"

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul magnifies the Lord

⁴⁷ *and my spirit rejoices in **God my Savior,***

⁴⁸ *for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.*

*From now on **all generations will call me blessed,***

⁴⁹ *for **the Mighty One** has done great things for me –
and holy is his name.*

⁵⁰ ***His mercy** extends from generation to generation
to those who fear him.*

⁵¹ *He has performed **mighty deeds with his arm;**
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

⁵² *He has **brought down rulers** from their thrones
but has **lifted up the humble.***

⁵³ *He has **filled the hungry with good things**
but has **sent the rich away empty.***

⁵⁴ *He has helped his servant **Israel,**
remembering his mercies*

⁵⁵ *just as he **promised our ancestors,**
to **Abraham** and his seed forever,*

Luke 1:30-33, 38

³³ And the angel said to her,

*"Do not be afraid, **Mary,** for you have found favor with God.*

³¹ *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and **bear a son,**
and you shall call his name **Jesus.***

³² *He will be **great** and will be called the Son of the Most High.
And the Lord God will give to him **the throne of his father David,***

³³ *and he will **reign over the house of Jacob forever,**
and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

³⁸ *"I am the **Lord's servant,**" Mary answered. "**May it be to me according to your word.**" Then the angel left her.*

Politics and Revolution

We all know politics is real, serious business. It's about power. Who controls it can affect our laws, conflicts, wars, conditions of society, advantages and disadvantages. Huge amounts of money are spent. Advantage, justice, fairness, competition are at stake. So also revolutions: political and societal: French, Chinese, Guttenberg, Tech., Global. Gospel birth narrative are cast in political terms: Matthew: "King of the Jews" Herod, Jesus. Luke: Caesar Augustus vs. the baby in the feed trough. Whose kingdom is really real? Jesus proclaims the "Kingdom of God"! Dies on a cross. Raised: "Lord and Messiah/King." Mary's Song speaks of *"bringing down rulers," "scattering the proud," "sending the rich away."*

Elizabeth and Mary: Old and Young

What a scene! Mary faces the mystery of Gabriel's announcement and her own acceptance. She goes to Elizabeth as the only other person who shares and might understand. What amazing words! *"Mother of my Lord" "...believed the Lord would fulfill promises to her..."* The Lord promised by Gabriel. The Lord is the unborn child of Mary. A new, challenging understanding of God. Can the universal Lord be son of an unknown girl? Mary grasps the reality/mystery and begins her song. God has already acted in her life and Elizabeth's. They are participating in / trying to understand / celebrating the event. The character of that event / revelation allows vision into the truth of God and his world, a truth often obscured by the structures of human power, honor, and wealth in the world.

Kingdom versus Kingdom

When Mary looks at herself and Elizabeth as God's choice for promises to Abraham (!), she sees a magnificent disregard for all human power structures (political, social, intellectual, religious). God's great revolution is brought through unknowns, to encompass creation. Honor vs. Honor. We worship celebrities, the rich, the strong, the well-known. All scattered. *"All generations will bless me"* not for me but for God's notice / work. All can share. Power vs. Power. The *"rulers (dynastes) on thrones"* – loved, hated, fought for, overthrown. Then there is the *"Mighty one" (dynatos)* who can do truly great things across ages. Wealth vs. Wealth. Those who secure life by accumulation – most of us. Sent away empty. Then there is the wealth of God's mercy: He lifts those at the bottom, fills the hungry. In this child the revolution has happened. The challenge: Do we live by the reality he reveals or by the delusions of a world of momentary power, honor, and wealth? His kingdom reality permeates our perception of poverty, power, politics, revolution. The church flourished in early centuries, persecuted, without power; sacrifice for others. Ironically it nearly lost its identity when it gained power and wealth. Became persecutor. The Kingdom revolution is carried out on every scale. Transforming values. Universe, Societies, Nations, Families, Individuals. We learn to trust God's grace. God at the center: That is real. God has acted. We learn to live by the amazing reality shown in Jesus.