

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

Sermon on 4th Advent Luke 1, 26-56



<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." <sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called<sup>[b]</sup> the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail." <sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. <sup>39</sup> At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" <sup>46</sup> And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, <sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful <sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." <sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

"I believe that Jesus Christ is true God, born of the Father in eternity and of the Virgin Mary, my Lord." This is how Martin Luther explains our belief in Jesus Christ in the second Article of our Faith. Who is he true God? He is the most high, the eternal, the almighty... and the second part of the sentence is on stark contrast: who came to us humans in with and under Mary. God in Mary. God in man. This has always been a contradiction that the human mind finds difficult to grasp it. This is why many people have come up with the idea that the attribute of God was later added to Jesus by the church. And so some say that this confession of the godhood of Jesus first came about in the year 325 through the Nicene Creed. Anyone who believes this has obviously not read the story of the birth of Jesus. Because long before Nicene and before Jesus came into the darkness of Mary's womb, the first confession that Jesus is God came about. There the angel says to Mary: "Therefore the holy one who is born will be called the Son of God." There is no other way to meet this Jesus than to meet him as God among us. If we understand Jesus as a teacher, as a revolutionary or as a moralist, he can never come close to us. When Jesus meets us, we can

only understand his mystery if we also understand that he is God among us. But God does not meet us with great fanfare and a heavenly golden carriage from heaven, but God comes indirectly. God comes in and with something human. God comes in Mary. I know we Lutherans have a problem with the Roman Catholic Church's cult of Mary. But perhaps by rejecting the cult mentioned above, we have lost a little of the Jesus' "being IN". Jesus in the body of Mary. Mary is the physical person in whom Jesus lived for the first time. Mary is the person by whom God came to us humans for the first time. Mary is therefore also a symbol of the Church. For just as Jesus lived in Mary, God still lives in the Church today. And in this sense, the story of Mary is our story. And if it is said that Mary believed the words of God, then it is a challenge for us to do the same. If Mary was able to experience in the flesh that God lived in her, then this experience is also our experience. And if Mary praises God greatly, then we want to do the same. How does God become great in us? He did great things happen to Mary? How can God do great things in my life and be great in my life too? The humility of the servant Mary is remarkable and unmistakable. We do not find Jesus among the powerful, but in the manger. It is good for us to look for God in the lowly places during this Advent and Christmas season. He cannot be found where we elevate ourselves above others, justify ourselves or belittle others. God comes to us among the non-desired, among the unimportant, in humility and in the lowly. "He looked at me!" says Mary. God came close to her. Very close, in fact. I am sure that Mary's life was completely different after this apparition of the angel. I am sure that her faith in God was completely different after this apparition. Of course, Mary believed in God before. She knew the pious Jewish prayers by heart and she knew that God was there. But after this apparition with the angel, everything was different. Now she knew that God was close to her in a special way. He not only looked at her, but gave her a special task. He not only gave her a special task, but she knows, God turned to her personally. He will now take an interest in her life! He has her fate in his hands. It is truly a happy moment when I can know that my whole life is so close to God and in God: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" What qualified Mary in this way, so that God could be so close to her? What qualified her so that she could not only be close to God, but so that God would make His home in her? That Jesus Christ would be born in her? "He has looked upon the lowliness of his servant," she says in amazement. Some might assume that it was humility that qualified her so much that she was chosen above all others. But we know that there is no virtue, not even the virtue of humility, with which we can approach God or impress him with it. If we were to consider humility as a virtue with which we want to justify ourselves before God, it would in truth be the worst form of arrogance. Mary sees it differently: "God found me, a poor, despised, unattractive girl, and found grace!" This fact is not to be found in Mary's character, nor in any human virtue, but solely in God's gracious plan. And God is such that he sees things that our lowly. God is closest to those people who have nothing to show for themselves. Like Mary, like the Christian Church. Like each and every one of us. For where human strength diminishes, God's strength comes in.

Mary's hymn uses harsh language in the end. It speaks of the mighty deeds of God, who intervenes in political events and overthrows the powerful from their thrones. In doing so, he raises up the lowly. Here, too, we must not imagine some sort of political automatism. According to this rule, God would raise up the lowly so that we could be high and the others low. If that were the case, God would have to overthrow us once again after we have taken the position of the high people. Then the world would be like a big fanfare wheel, where you have to constantly change positions from top to bottom. No, we will not find a practical explanation of world history here. And Jesus is the last person who made his mission a party-political program to make the poor rich and the rich poor. When God exalts the lowly, he does not make them powerful. Mary will not be strong after the angel's announcement either. Not even strong one in faith. What is

remarkable in this story is that the child of Jesus remains silent. John jumps for joy in his mother's womb. Jesus does not do that. We also notice that Mary certainly experienced human doubts. Even later, when her son took different paths than she had imagined. In this too, Mary is a role model for us Christians. We hear God's voice, we believe. But then we have to endure silence and God not speaking. Even when the powerful fight against us. Even when faith seems illogical and unrealistic. Even when faith in me becomes weak.

The humility of the servant Mary is a characteristic of the Church. The Church also remains powerless and often without room for maneuver. We are certainly unable to prove our faith. Mary is a comfort to us. For it is precisely in her humility that she is proof of God's actions. To understand this, we must go back to the beginning of world history. There we see the opposite of Mary in Adam and Eve. They did not want to find God in humility but in highness. They wanted to exult themselves and themselves be God. And this desire was the origin of sin. The story of a new world begins with Mary. It is a story that leads in the opposite direction to that of Adam and Eve. Instead of sin, destruction and death, this road would lead to salvation- Instead of separation from God, fellowship with God is created. Mary stands as the antithesis of Adam and Eve and consciously chooses a completely different path. Instead of striving for something higher, she finds God in the depths of lowliness. The story that changed the world and established faith in the world is a story where God stands on the side of the lowly. Then we must also not stand anywhere else. Except where Mary stood.

“God has looked upon the lowliness of his servant!” Amen