



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families for the week of December 23, 2018

Luke 1:39-55 *Blessed*

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Luke 1:39-55](#).

- Christmas is for nobodies.
- Remember that when we begin reading the stories in the New Testament, there has been some 400 years of silence. And now God speaks and acts.
- He is focused on obscure people. Nobodies. “In the days of Herod, King of Judea...”
- An old woman who miraculously conceives John the Baptist and a virginal young woman who conceives our Savior by the Holy Spirit.
- No wonder the *Magnificat* is all about God overturning the way we think about our lives and about the world.
- What makes this story so rich is the cheerful willing lowliness and humility of these women. Look at what they say:
 - “And why is it granted to me that the mother of my lord should come to me?”
 - “The Lord has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.”
- Note what she says that could be counter-intuitive to us: “Holy is His name.” How does His holiness express itself?
- God loves to undertake for the underdog who calls on His mercy. She mentions this three times: “He has mercy on those who fear him” (50), “He has exalted those of low degree” (52), and “He has filled the hungry with good things” (53). That’s one side of God’s holiness. The other side is that God opposes and abases the haughty. Mary mentions this three times also: “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (51), “He has put down the mighty from their thrones” (52), and “The rich he has sent away empty” (53).
- It is clear from Mary’s words (and from the whole Bible) that God is not partial to the rich, the powerful, or the proud. How could God be partial to the things which in our world are, more often than not, substitutes for God.
- In both demonstration and words it is clear that recognizing our true estate is the pathway to joy and significance.
- We have this treasure in clay pots.
- In vv.36–37, the angel says to Mary, to encourage her that her impossible pregnancy really can come true, “And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”
- That is why Mary “arose and went with haste”. She is looking for confirmation.
- In the face of infertility, and barrenness God does the impossible.
- He gives & He sustains
- To get more to the point of obscurity, the driving action of this text is actually hidden from our eyes. We only know this because Elizabeth tells us that her baby leapt for joy.
- Gabriel had told this baby’s father that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. Only people are filled with the Holy Spirit, even people in utero.
- The weakest bear witness.

WEPC Lectionary Project: *Union with Christ*

West End Presbyterian Church is using the Scripture readings recommended by the Revised Common Lectionary as a framework for our corporate worship and our personal and family devotion. This project is part of WEPC's 25th Anniversary Year and will run from December 2018 through November 2019. The Lectionary gives us access to the whole counsel of Scripture and these texts are a means for us to grow in our understanding of our union with Christ.

To learn more and subscribe to a daily email of Daily Scripture Readings, visit www.wepc.org/lectionary

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 23, 2018

Micah 5:2-5a

A Ruler from Bethlehem

Psalms 80:1-7

The Light of Your Countenance

Hebrews 10:5-10

I Have Come to do Your Will

Luke 1:39-55

Blessed are You Among Women

Reflection on Sunday 12/23

Christmas Eve, Monday

Isaiah 9:2-7

Unto Us a Child is Born

Luke 2:1-20

God With Us

Christmas Day, Tuesday

Isaiah 52:7-10

Announcing Salvation

John 1:1-14

The Word Became Flesh

Wednesday

II Chronicles 24:17-24

The Stoning of Zechariah

Acts 6:1-7; 7:51-60

The Stoning of Stephen

Daily

Psalm 148

God's Splendor

Preparation for Sunday 12/30

Thursday

Proverbs 8:32-36

Listen to Wisdom

John 21:19b-24

Johns' Testimony

Friday

Isaiah 54:1-13

Steadfast Love

Revelation 21:1-7

New Heavens & New Earth

Saturday

I Chronicles 28:1-10

Solomon's Temple

I Corinthians 3:10-17

The Spirit's Temple

Daily

Psalm 147:12-20

Let Your Face Shine