

*The good news from Mary.*

(Luk 1:46-55)

\* Today we are again at the end but, in this case, we are not at the end of life but at the end of the season of the preparation for Christ. This Sunday of Advent gives us the last words about the King's coming. In connection with the reality and complexity of Christ's coming, we've learned many important things and the last important thing we've learned is from John the Baptist, who taught us, "I baptize you with water, but one more powerful than I am is coming — I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire, (Luk 3:16) . Therefore, as we heard this news last Sunday, we learned that some people would be baptized in the Holy Spirit and some people would be baptized by fire. The message made us happy as soon as we realized the real meaning of this news. Significantly, the lesson for today from (Lk 1:46-55) , is known as the Magnificat, or the song of Mary, and it is all about the same meaning - God's mercy and justice.

\* As we start to look into this important matter, please join with me in prayer rendering to God all glory for the gift of the salvation in Christ Jesus and for his mighty protection. O Blessed Trinity, I thank you for the salvation of my soul that I don't deserve, and yet, I may receive; at the same time I thank You for judgments by which you keep me in your dwelling place. By Your grace I prepared my heart to You; therefore, enter and abide in my house, You are Blessed of the Lord! Then by the power of your love I will gladly avoid all worldly vanities, amusements, sins, and wickedness, in order that You alone may be the occupant of my soul and the ruler of my heart. With Your dwelling, I will greatly rejoice; for You have covered me with the robe of righteousness. Teach me, O Lord, your humility and meekness; grant me the knowledge of truth and understanding. Keep me well until my blessed end so that I may remain by Your dwelling temple forever. For the sake of Your most holy name we pray, Amen

\* Because we are at the end of the season of the preparation for Christ, we should be ready to meet him, if not as the King of glory, then at least as the baby Jesus, laying in a manger by the hands of his mother Mary, about 2017 years ago. Significantly the place of meeting and time for us is already assigned, and it will happen in St. Luke's on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, at 7pm. Hopefully, some guests and old friends also will come; after that we will enjoy with the beautiful Christmas arrangements, readings, carols, music and so forth. No doubt, these things are worthy to be concentrated on, but we would be of all men most miserable if for this only reason we come together. Please understand, not even all the beauties of this world can make us happy if there would be no Jesus among us, merciful and just King of glory.

\* Next in significance is the Gospel lesson for today, which is all about God's mercy and justice. At this moment, the good news comes to us from the woman who gave flesh to the Son of God, the Mother of Jesus, the blessed Mary. (Saying more accurately about Mary's message, it turns out to be the reflection on a person's experiences of the divine nature.) Mary became the living fulfillment of the good news spoken

through John Baptist. Mary was baptized by the Holy Spirit as she was told, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God, (Luk 1:35). Therefore, Mary appeared to be the living fulfillment of God's promise and the person who told us the good news out of her experiences. Next in significance is that Mary speaks to us from a point of time that belongs to the eschatological future. Around 2017 years ago Mary had already passed from death into everlasting life, but that is another topic. Meanwhile the main topic remains the same, God's mercy and justice.

\* Because these two values were considered as a matter of great importance, then let's look at them with all the specifics on the ground of Mary's song. To see better where mercy is and where justice is we separate Magnificat into two parts. In the beginning, Mary praises God; she says, *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.* (Lk 1:46). Next Mary's saying is about what God has done for her and for those who fear Him, and for those of humble estate and for the hungry. To all of them God has shown mercy. At the same time, Mary pointed towards the proud, the mighty, and the rich. Those have received God's justice accordingly, and they were scattered, brought down and sent away empty. From what was said, we could see clearly the two kinds of God's acts. Taking into consideration the Scripture in hole, first goes God's mercy toward all people; and second goes God's justice towards those who don't response adequately on God's mercy. Now only imagine if a person like Mary had rejected God's mercy to her, then, what would happen next? Do you think all generations would praise such a person? Instead of having a great blessing, such a person would find herself in a state of misery.

\* Friends, Mary's message today is under attack by the false teachers as is the good news from John the Baptist, (Lk 3:16). If you remember the account of John's message, we said that the false teachers blend the baptism by the Holy Spirit with the baptism by fire. They say that there is only one baptism. In this sense, the work of fire refers to the cleansing, purifying work of the Spirit through the water of our Baptism and following its sanctification. As a result, the whole message was trimmed in such a way that there is no judgment on the surface, only mercy, mercy and mercy. Now, let's see how the false treat the message from Mary. Significantly, they again blend God's mercy with justice (judgment). On Mary's account they say, *True justice is not distinct from mercy, but is rooted in mercy.* Those who understood this point, usually consider themselves as the mature Christians; therefore, *they willingly trust God, to want this God to "dwell in my heart through faith."* In fact, they deceive themselves – the faith they have in mind is theoretical faith. It is not the true faith but an illusion of faith, because they believe and have a trust in God that is not the biblical. Consequently, the false teachers wish us to accept Mary's song of mercy and justice as Mary's merciful song of justice. There is no more preaching about merciful and just God, but there is a new God of merciful justice. But in Christ's second Advent, with the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD, He will come;

then He will remind them of the true righteousness of God alone, (Psa 71:16).

\* Now I want to re-adjust your focus from Mary's intimate joy as the result of her salvation to our joy in connection with the salvation we are given through faith in Christ Jesus. From the Gospel of Luke we received two evidences of God's mercy that relate to Jesus' birthday. Both of them, I believe, became known through the same Archangel Gabriel. First, the Angel appeared to Mary with the good news from God and second, he appeared to shepherds with the good news. It happened some time at midnight when the shepherds were in the field caring for their flock. You know this story, (Luk 2:8-14). Upon seeing Gabriel they were greatly afraid but the Angel said, "*Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for **all** the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.*" And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*" The main idea of this good news is that in Jesus Christ God revealed his mercy for all people. On this occasion, those shepherds represent all humanity. Therefore, this merciful act in the forgiveness of our sins by virtue of Christ's atonement also belongs to us as well as to Mary, if we believe and put our hope in the Lord Jesus.

\* But where is justice you may ask? Does God forget to save his people from the wicked, or will He judge the ungodly mercifully? Certainly, He keeps a record of all wicked things and who does them if they are not forgiven. As I noticed, mercy goes first; in Jesus Christ God forgave men's sins; and second, He will judge mercifully **but** only those who were merciful while they lived in their bodies, (Jas 2:13). We should be attentive to the Word of God where it speaks about His mercy and judgment. Scripture teaches that without a positive response to God's merciful act in Christ Jesus, nobody will be judged mercifully, *for if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries*, (Heb 10:26).

\* Thinking back to Mary's song of true mercy and justice we found, as it handles God's mercy and justice inseparably, similar to what was found in Jesus' seamless garment that was robbed by the soldiers as a trophy but was not cut into pieces, (Joh 19:24). Therefore, let's not follow those who want to cut justice from the good news, (Mat 23:23). The good news is always good if it is accepted and believed as it is.

Beloved, let God's mercy and justice save us and preserve us to the end, in this case not to the end of the season of Advent but to the end of our earthly life. Amen