

## INTRO:

1. Advent – Latin *adventus* (lit. approach, arrival) – here Jesus' *first* coming, not His *last*. "Joy to the World!"
2. V46 "Mary said". Consider the literary, cultural and narrative contexts – mind-blowing for numerous reasons.
  - a. Vv26-38 "Angel Gabriel...Mary greatly troubled...how will this be...?" Yet: "I am the Lord's servant"!
  - b. Because of tenor, some commentators attribute Vv46-55 to Elizabeth (cf manuscript evidence)

## STROPHE 1: God's Kindness (Mary's joyful exultation and gratitude for God looking upon her with favor)

3. V46 "My soul glorifies the Lord" (KJV "My soul doth magnify the Lord")
  - a. '*Magnificat*'. Latin verb for 'glorifies', Vulgate translation of Bible (Jerome of Stridon, 382AD).
  - b. A Psalm/canticle of praise. Parallels Ps 103 and the prayer/song of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1-10. Follows the common form of thanksgiving Psalms, beginning in gratitude then justifications for gratitude.
  - c. Gratitude and anxiety are inversely proportional. (See 'Gratitude Helps Curb Anxiety' by Najma Khorrami, *Psychology Today*, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/comfort-gratitude/202007/gratitude-helps-curb-anxiety>)
4. V47 "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior"
  - a. Tri/bi-partite self? "Soul" (*psuché*) cf "spirit" (*pneúma*). Bigger point – radical holism! (See Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, Pp155-164).
  - b. Remarkable she is rejoicing, given the context and her predicament.
  - c. Jas 1:2-4. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
5. V48 "He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant...all generations will call me blessed"
  - a. God humbles the exulted but exalts the humble; and V51-52.
  - b. Mariolatry v anti-Maryan movement v due honor.
    - i. "Mother of God" *Theotokos* (in Greek; or *Dei Genitrix* in Latin) for "[she] whose offspring is God" – evolved into a Mariology where she is viewed as Mother of all creatures, co-redemptrix, Queen of Heaven, cosmic intercessor (Larry Hart, *Truth Aflame*, p.329); cf her still needing God as Savior Lk 1:47.
    - ii. Cf the only time the Bible uses 'queen of heaven' is refers to Ashtoreth the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess who the people syncretistically claim is Yahweh's consort (Jer 7, 44). Likewise Jesus in Lk 1:27-28 chose not to unduly elevate Mary – so neither should we.
    - iii. Yet she *is* a humble teenager from Nazareth, who became the most honored human ever to have lived! (Gen 1:15; *proto evangelion*)
  - c. Undue pride? No! "Pride is refusing to accept God's gifts or taking credit for what God has done; humility is accepting the gifts and using them to praise and serve God." (Bock, McNight, Stein, *NLTASB*, p.1672; and Moses self-referencing in Num 12:3)

## STROPHE 2: God's Character (He has grace to all who revere Him)

6. V49 "the Mighty One...holy is His name"
  - a. 'Mighty One' (*Dunatós*) possessing power, strength, an ability to accomplish His purposes (and see Acts 1:8, Is 9:6, Zeph 3:17)
7. V50 His mercy extends to those who fear Him"
  - a. Fear?! Cf 1Jn 4:18 "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.") Here 'fear' (*phobeó* – same word used elsewhere for being scared/timid); denotes obedience driven by awe and reverence.
  - b. Fear v love. What's the stronger motivator? "Love fosters inspiration, harnesses the full capacity of the person, and releases organizational members to realize their full potential. Although fear has a motivational effect, it also has devastating and limiting consequences." ('Love as a Replacement for Fear in the Workplace', by Debby Thomas, *Emerging Leadership Studies*, Issue 1(7), 2014)
  - c. "I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world. It is not an expression of impractical idealism, but of practical realism. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, love is an

absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love.” (Martin Luther King Jr. *Strength to Love*, Pp 50-5).

**STROPHE 3: God’s Sovereignty (His ongoing involvement with humankind)**

8. Vv51-54 “He has...” are in aorist tense. “[P]robably express what God is going to do in the future through the Messiah – actions that have already begun to take place in that the Messiah has already been conceived.” (Howard Marshall, ‘Luke’ in *NIV New Bible Commentary*, p983)
9. V53 “He has filled the hungry....but has sent the rich away empty”
  - a. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt 5:6; Jn 6:35)
  - b. Here, as in Hannah’s song 1Sam 2:1-10, God is the champion of the poor, oppressed, downtrodden, and despised. (also see *inter alia* Is 58:6-12)
10. Vv51-53 “...portray[s] a ‘reversal’ in the end times, when those who have abused power will be judged and those who have suffered persecution will be exalted.” (*Nelson Study Bible*, p.1688).

**STROPHE 4: God’s Particularity (His mercy to Israel)**

11. V54 “He has helped His servant, Israel.” Nation as ‘servant’ of God as seen in the OT (see, *inter alia*, Lev 25, 55; Neh 1, 10; Jer 30, 46; Is 41-44, 48-49)
12. Vv54b-5 “merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever”

**POSTSCRIPT: reality bites**

13. V56 “Mary stayed...three months and then returned home”
  - a. Highly probable she stayed to see John’s birth (traumatizing!), before the long, pregnant, trek home.
  - b. Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in Ein Karem which was ~100ml from Nazareth, and 1300ft more elevated, though tough, bandit-infested territory.
  - c. Likely her father (Heli if Luke 3:23 is Maryan lineage; or Joachim according to early church tradition), or trusted friends; OR even Joseph; accompanied her home because of the perilous journey. When did Joseph see her pregnancy? On the way back, or at home. Either way, the angel exhorts him to “take Mary home as your wife” (Matt 1:18-25).

**REFLECTIONS for the Brave of Heart**

1. Name your biggest joy-suck (or, if you must, two) at this time of year. (Well aren’t you a Grinch!?)
2. As you reflect on Mary’s story, what do you admire/ question/ take away?
3. Where do you see God in your problems/suffering (Above? Behind?! In?)
4. What would friends who know you best say you “hunger and thirst” for?
5. How would you define the difference between ‘happiness’ and ‘joy’.
6. Be real. Do you need greater intimacy (with God / others), gratitude, or authenticity?