

SCRIPTURE READING FOR DECEMBER 18, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke is one of the four gospel stories telling the life, teaching and way of Jesus of Nazareth. Only Luke and Matthew include the story of Jesus' birth in their accounts. Luke focuses on Mary, whereas Matthew upon Joseph. Today's selection has become known as the "Magnificat" – Mary's song. It echoes other songs, poems of praise in the Hebrew scriptures, in particular that of Hannah (1 Samuel 2) and Moses & Miriam (Exodus 15).

HIS NAME: Ha Shem in Hebrew. This expression often replaces God's name YHWH in the Hebrew Scriptures as its too holy to name or write.

MERCY :: ἔλεος pronounced as *éleos* commonly is translated as mercy, pity, compassion. And it means much more, as it's most likely the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *תּוֹנָה* or *HESED* which means steadfast-love, covenant-loyalty, covenant-love properly, "mercy" as it is defined by loyalty to God's covenant. *HESED* is the word often used to describe how God loves humanity.

EUGENE PETERSON'S MODERN "THE MESSAGE" TRANSLATION OF THE MAGNIFICAT IS GOOD TO USE TO GET UNDERNEATH THE RADICAL IMAGES THAT IT CONTAINS.

"And Mary said,
I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy,
set apart from all others.
His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies,
piled them high." – Luke 1:46-55

Luke 1:39-58

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION UPDATED EDITION

³⁹ *In those days* Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered *the house of Zechariah* and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And **blessed** is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely 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 indeed, his **MERCY** is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his **MERCY**,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great **MERCY** to her, and they rejoiced with her.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- What does Mary's song say about God; about her?
- What themes in the songs of Hannah, Moses and Miriam do you hear repeated in Mary's song?
- How do these texts touch what you're living, celebrating, and struggling with today?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be, or change through this scripture?

THE SONG OF HANNAH IN 1 SAMUEL 2:1-10 (NRSV)

¹ Hannah prayed and said,
"My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my God.
My mouth derides my enemies
because I rejoice in your victory.
² There is no Holy One like the Lord,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
³ Talk no more so very proudly;
let not arrogance come from your mouth,
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.
⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out
for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
⁶ The Lord kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
⁷ **The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low; he also exalts.**
⁸ **He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.**
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and on them he has set the world.
⁹ He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked will perish in darkness,
for not by might does one prevail.
¹⁰ The Lord! His adversaries will be shattered;
the Most High will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the power of his anointed."

SIMILAR "SONGS" IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES THE SONG OF MOSES IN EXODUS 15 (NRSV)

¹ Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:
"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed
gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
² The Lord is my strength and my might,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him;
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
³ The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.
⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea;
his elite officers were sunk in the Red Sea.
⁵ The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
⁶ Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power—
your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy.
⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your
adversaries;
you sent out your fury; it consumed them like stubble.
⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue; I will overtake;
I will divide the spoil; my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'
¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
¹¹ Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
¹² You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.
¹³ In your steadfast love you led the people whom you
redeemed;
you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
¹⁴ The peoples heard; they trembled;
pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
trembling seized the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
¹⁶ Terror and dread fell upon them;
by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone
until your people, O Lord, passed by,
until the people whom you acquired passed by.
¹⁷ You brought them in and planted them on the mountain
of your own possession,
the place, O Lord, that you made your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established.
¹⁸ The Lord will reign forever and ever."