

Mary, Did You Know?

[Micah 5:2-5a](#), [Luke 1:39-55](#)

Our gospel lesson comes from the book of Luke. The author of Luke had a true gift of telling a story with all the added drama and excitement that just makes you want to keep reading. This year in the lectionary the scriptures turn to Luke throughout the year so we will become very familiar with this gospel. In today's scripture, we hear Luke's account of Mary's story and her visit to Elizabeth.

In many ways, Mary's story is like a much-loved musical. Great musicals throughout our time have included several elements that make them stand out. Elements such as drama, excitement, song-and-dance numbers abound that make you want to pretend for an instant that you are the star of the show as soon as you hear them. Think of your favorite musical if you have one. For me, it's The Music Man. Right from the very

beginning, the salesmen on the train in this story break into song and imitate the sounds of the train in which they are riding.

Remember the part, “Yessssss, sir, yessssss sir.” It sounds just like the train as its pulling into the station. But the drama takes off from the very beginning of the story. Professor Hill is a con artist who sells band instruments to town children with the assumption that he will instruct the band, only he has a reputation for collecting the money for instruments and uniforms and then skipping out of town and on to the next prospect.

Today’s gospel lesson is full of drama too. Mary has received a visit from an angel who tells her she will be the mother of the son of God. Drama – right from the very start. You get it all here. Fear, astonishment, confusion, reassurance, and finally acceptance of her task. I truly believe that after the angel addressed Mary, there was probably a bit of a ‘pregnant’

pause. I think God was giving Mary a choice. I believe she had the right to accept or reject this calling from God. And in that moment of decision, Mary steps forward and accepts God's calling for her. Regardless of what the future holds, Mary takes on the task to be the mother of Jesus. Just like a good musical, we are hooked from the very beginning of the story. The drama unfolds as we see that this honor puts Mary, and her espoused husband, in a very difficult position. God has to reassure both of them that this drama is blessed by God and Joseph also agrees to be the earthly parent of Jesus. Drama – crisis – decision – comfort. This story has it all!

Today's lesson continues with Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth. Here we find more drama, as Elizabeth's husband Zachariah was struck with the lack of being able to speak all throughout Elizabeth's pregnancy, as he doubted this could

happen since he and Elizabeth were beyond the age of bearing children. We still have the same elements – drama-crisis-decision-comfort. Luke just packs in the story line so we are sitting on the edge of our seats waiting to see how the action will unfold.

With Mary's visit comes the next element of a good musical – excitement. In *The Music Man*, Professor Hill gets the town all stirred up about a boy's band and how this could be the answer to their concerns about the idle minds of their youngsters. The town is literally putty in the professor's hands as he paints the dire need for his services in a town that had no idea it had such a need. The excitement is contagious and ripples through the entire town.

Mary greets her cousin Elizabeth and even *in utero* the excitement of the story is displayed. The baby in Elizabeth's

womb leaps for joy as Mary approaches, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. Have you ever experienced a time when you truly felt filled with the Holy Spirit? Maybe it was during a song or a prayer time when that excitement just caught you by storm! Excitement – right down to the core! Elizabeth says to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” Excitement on every level! Luke doesn’t leave anything out!

No good musical is complete without a great musical number. In *The Music Man*, Professor Hill gets the town singing about 76 trombones leading the big parade. They even

end up acting out the parts of the instruments as the entire town ends up parading down the street in their make-believe band!

Luke doesn't leave out music either. Just at the critical turning point in the story, when Mary receives her reassurance from Elizabeth about her future, Mary takes on the role of a lead character in a good musical – she breaks into song! Mary sings of the Lord bringing down the powerful from off their thrones, and of raising up the lowly and outcasts of society. She sings of the hungry being filled and the rich being turned away. Mary sings the ultimate song of justice for those living on the margins of society. This is great stuff! I'm thinking Rogers and Hammerstein could learn a few things from Luke!

The only thing that seems to be missing from Mary's story is the great dance number that goes with the climactic song. But wait – maybe it's in there too! Can't you picture Mary dancing

before the Lord as she sings her song of victory? God has truly blessed her. She has felt that reassurance and security to chase away her doubts and fears. Her future is still unknown, but she knows there will be blessings in fulfilling her role as the mother of Jesus. John was dancing in Elizabeth's womb. I can see Mary dancing in the street like the townspeople in *The Music Man* as she feels a true and unquenchable joy that comes from God almighty.

This is a great story. But as one of my instructor tells us, there are two questions he asks of every sermon – What's the point? And, so what? Ok – so what? What do we do with story? What does it mean for us today? Many of you have probably heard this story many times before. How can it help us today?

Perhaps there is drama in your life too. Maybe you are going through some difficult times, and during this season of Advent and expectation, you're caught in the crisis. Perhaps this story helps us to put our trust in God to see us through and find ways to rejoice in the midst of difficult times. Today we lit the candle of love. This is the final candle in the Advent wreath. We have followed the path of hope, peace, joy, and love. Perhaps today is the day to feel God's love for you in a very special way. Perhaps we can trust God so that we can see beyond the drama and crisis and move on to the joy and song. God can put that song in your heart. God can give you that fire that makes you want to get up and dance! God can give you the reassurance that even though we cry through the night, joy comes in the morning!

God loves you. No matter what has happened in the past, God provides that strength and endurance and true joy that makes us excited to be the children of God. This is good stuff! When you find something this good, you want to share it. You want everyone to feel this joy and excitement and love that is down-right contagious! The 'so what' in this message is that God loves you, whether you are hurting or celebrating during this Advent season. God will raise up the lowly and the hungry will be filled with good things. Thanks be to God for God's incredible gift of God's son Jesus, who came as a poor carpenter's son, but became the savior of the world. Let us celebrate God's love for us by sharing God's love with others.

Amen.