

## Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

December 16, 2018

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**Earning Trust**

Luke 1:39-56

### EXPLORING THE SERMON

- What did you hear?
- What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

### VERSES FOR MEDITATION AND REFLECTION

<sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be <sup>[e]</sup> a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

### DISCUSSION

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of joy. Joy is significantly different from happiness because more than just a good feeling, it is tied to an uncertainty we have had. CS Lewis describes joy as deeper than happiness; that joy is the presence of purpose.

***How do you see happiness and joy as being different? Discuss times in your life when you have experienced joy.***

This passage begins with Mary leaving "in haste" to travel to the hill country to her cousin Elizabeth's home. It seems that the haste with which Mary travels is because Elizabeth is the sole person who could validate this experience for Mary, as Gabriel had told her that Elizabeth would also be having a child. As Mary nervously waits at Elizabeth and Zechariah's door, it is as if Luke wants us to experience the anxiety Mary must have been feeling, not knowing if Elizabeth would affirm this shared experience or not – the worst result of which would be shame and embarrassment for Mary.

***Discuss what it would have been like walking in Mary's shoes: she left her home, traveled by herself, with nothing but her faith in God and trust in Gabriel's message, at the risk of being shamed by her cousin Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah. How much uncertainty must Mary have felt?***

When Mary greets Elizabeth, the baby John "leaps for joy in her womb" and Elizabeth was immediately "filled with the holy spirit." Mary was filled with an obvious great joy, as what follows is known as *Mary's Magnificat*, or *Mary's Song of Praise*."

***Think about and discuss Mary's sense of relief when Elizabeth affirms to her that she knows this baby Mary is carrying is the Holy One. How is Mary's joy and relief tied to the anxiety and uncertainty she felt about her situation before she visited Elizabeth?***

***It's no surprise that Mary burst out in "song" which begins with how God has blessed her with this responsibility. Discuss the shift Mary makes from herself to God's promises for the rest of the world. How does this remind us that God's faithfulness to us today can assure us of His faithfulness to the world around us?***

### PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for the joy that comes from knowing You and believing that your purposes are being worked out for the good of the world. Help us to have the joy that comes from the truth of your faithfulness to us, and to share your love and joy with others. Amen.*