

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year C, 2009
Luke 1:39-55
The Rev. Ronald N. Johnson

This morning is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and we begin the final week's run towards Christmas. The theme for today, and for this final week of Advent, is an important one. This is Mary's Sunday. Let's look at the gospel reading for this day.

Luke tells us a story about an exchange between Mary and her kinswoman Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. Mary made a little trip into the countryside to visit Elizabeth, shortly before the birth of the Lord. Elizabeth greeted Mary with words that have come to us powerfully through the centuries. "Blessed are you, Mary, among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" These are the classic words of the "Hail Mary." This Sunday reminds us that Mary is blessed, indeed, and not just among women. She is, without doubt, the most revered woman in history, and excepting her son, Jesus, the most revered person in history. Yet nothing about her is all that extraordinary, except that she was a model of obedience to God and through her obedience God took human form.

In just a few days we will celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation, the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian theology tells us that God's creating Word, the *Logos*, became man. In the ancient understanding, God created by saying, "Let it be," and it was. This creating "Word" of God gave us the universe and sustains the universe. The Word is the means by which God accomplishes his will. Philosophically, the Word is the process of God doing, God causing. The Word is God in action. We understand, from Saint John's Gospel, that it is this proactive, creative and enabling divine Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. When we read the prologue to John's Gospel, on the First Sunday after Christmas, you will hear John tell us "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Arguably, these are the most powerful words in the entire Bible.

What does this have to do with the last Sunday of Advent and what does it have to do with Mary? Mary was the channel, the agency by which God took human form. We rightfully revere her and call her blessed, because she gave birth to Jesus. Advent points us to the event of this holy birth. But the point is that Advent is *pointing*. It is anticipatory. Advent tells us that the Jesus is drawing near. Prepare to meet your sovereign who is also your savior. Prepare to meet God in our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*