

The Christmas Story

Faith Seeking Understanding

By

Carolyn Sombekke



I really dislike the phrase “Covid Christmas”. It brings up connotations of the Children’s story “The Grinch that stole Christmas”. As I struggle to work out how I will celebrate Christmas with my big family that far exceeds the 30 in house limit placed on us this year, I remind myself that these difficulties are nothing compared to the enormous task asked of the poor, teenage Mary. “Hey Mary, how do you feel about giving birth to the Messiah?” I can’t even imagine what she must have felt!

As we prepare for Christmas in this Advent season, I invite you to read the story of the birth of Jesus in the Bible. It only appears in two of the Gospels. Matthew 1:18-25 and 2:1-12 talks about an angel, Joseph’s dilemma, a star and wise men with gifts. In Luke’s Gospel 1:26-80 and 2: 1-20 we hear about the angel Gabrielle perplexing the virgin Mary with his visit, the pregnant Mary visiting her relative Elizabeth, no place for them at the inn, the manger, shepherds and a multitude of angels singing. Taking from both Gospel accounts, and filling in the gaps to flesh out the story, we now have the multitude of Christmas nativity stories that we hear today.

If we focus on Mary again, we see in Luke’s gospel that she recites a song of praise: This is often referred to as Mary’s Magnificat today. On her visit to the elderly Elizabeth, she seems to have found empathy and reassurance from someone else who is also experiencing the grace of God. Both Mary & Elizabeth have become pregnant in miraculous ways with God’s intervention. It is here, with Elizabeth, that Luke portrays Mary speaking words of great strength and wisdom. In the poem below Joy Crowley gives us a modern version of what Mary might have sung.

Poem by Joy Crowley:

My soul sings in gratitude.
I’m dancing in the mystery of God.
The light of the Holy One is within me
and I am blessed, so truly blessed.

This goes deeper than human thinking.
I am filled with awe
at Love whose only condition
is to be received.

The gift is not for the proud,
for they have no room for it.
The strong and self-sufficient ones
don’t have this awareness.

But those who know their emptiness
can rejoice in Love’s fullness.
It’s the Love that we are made for,
the reason for our being.
It fills our inmost heart space
and brings to birth in us, the Holy One.

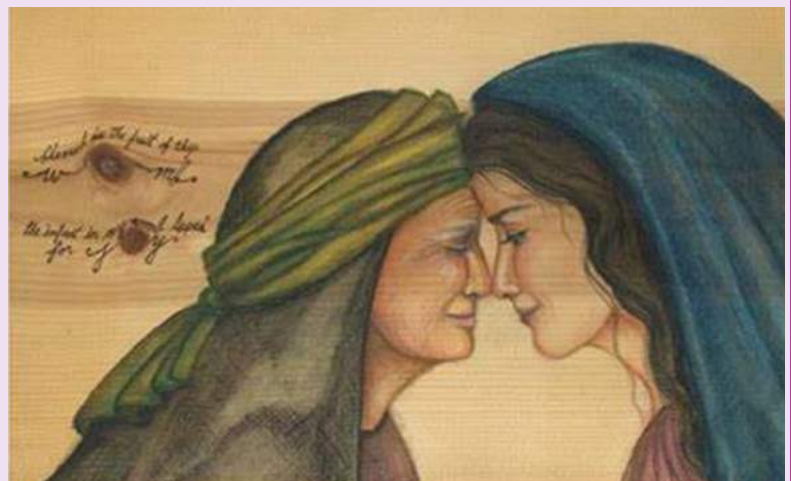


Photo: “Mary and Elizabeth – The Visitation”
by Maysoun Y. Seman