

30 November 2016
Advent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Magnificent Magnificat Verbs: He *regards*”
Text: Deuteronomy 7:6-14a; Luke 1:46-55

*Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on - or regarded - the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;*

To appreciate the fact that God regards us, consider for the moment all the people in the world we do not regard. Everyday. People we walk by without even noticing. People we do not look at because we do not want to regard them. People we avoid either because we are angry with them or don't want to get involved with them. People that we think are not worth our attention, time, or effort.

But not so God. How different we are from Him and He from us. For He regards, He looks upon, the lowly, the humble, the down and out. And He does so not in disgust - but in love. He does so in order to help. And the greater the distance, the lower and more humble the person, the greater His compassion. He is the champion of the weak, the poor; those no one wants anything to do with.

Think of the examples we have from Jesus' life. When a Canaanite woman keeps crying out to Him for help because her daughter is demon possessed, the disciples ask Jesus to send her away - disregard her. Jesus won't do it (Matthew 15:21-28).

When a blind man keeps calling out after Jesus: *Lord, have mercy!* the crowds try to get him to be quiet and shuffle Jesus on - to disregard him. But Jesus won't have that (Mark 10:46-52).

Then there was the sick man at the pool of Bethesda who had been there for thirty-eight years, because no one would help him into the healing waters. Jesus goes there to help him (John 5:1-9).

Or how about the crowds that listened to Jesus' teaching days on end and when they're hungry, the disciples tell Jesus to send them away - disregard them. And Jesus says: You give them something to eat (Matthew 14:13-21). Jesus looks on them with compassion, for they are like sheep without a shepherd.

But God's regarding started long before those people came along. He regarded Adam and Eve hiding in the Garden from Him and from each other after they sinned (Genesis 3). He could have turned His back on them as they had done to Him. But no. That's not who He is.

He regarded Abraham while he was still an idolater in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans and called him to faith (Joshua 24:2-4).

He regarded, as we heard in the Old Testament reading tonight, the people of Israel. And not because they were more numerous than other peoples, or stronger, or better, or anything in them. The Lord regards because of who He is - a faithful, loving God who wants only to serve and bless and save all people on earth.

And now He regards Mary. Because of who she is? No. Because of who He is. Because it is now time to keep His promise of a Saviour. So He looks all the way down to Mary. He looks past all those women of means, of wealth, of position, of power, and whatever else is praiseworthy on this earth, and regards *Mary*. She is the one who will be the mother of the Saviour, the mother of God. And ***all generations will call her blessed***. For blessed are those God looks upon and regards.

And so blessed are you as well.

Though sometimes we might wish God *didn't* regard us. You know, those times we sin, when our thoughts, words, deed, or desires are particularly egregious. We might wish the all-seeing God *didn't* see those things, and so think a little better of us; that we're not quite as bad as all that.

But it is good that God regards us even at those times. For what if there were sins you could keep secret and hidden from God? Things that He didn't see and know? How could you be sure that those sins are forgiven? You couldn't. But if God sees them all and knows them all - every single dirty, disgusting, humiliating last one - then you know this: they've all been put on Mary's son on the cross. That there, Jesus paid for them all. Your dirt became His dirt. Your disgusting behavior His. Your humiliation His. All of it. And He took it all to the grave and came out without it.

And so when God now regards you, when He looks down upon you, all the way down to you, He doesn't see a sinner - He sees His child. Baptized, washed, forgiven, raised to new life. And He and His angels rejoice over you (Luke 15:10). The world may never. The world may disregard you and consider you unimportant. But not God. Not your Father in heaven. Not your Saviour, Jesus. As the psalm says, you are *the apple of His eye* (Psalm 17:8).

Such love and compassion caused Mary to magnify the Lord and rejoice in Him. She was

overwhelmed, though this pregnancy was not going to be easy and her life after that even tougher. But regarded by the Lord, the Lord would see her through. The Lord would not leave her, but keep and sustain her through it all.

And so you too. The Lord who regards you will not leave you. Life may get tough, but even then He is blessing you. Maybe in ways you know and realize, and maybe in ways you don't. But His promises are greater than what we may know or realize, and He has promised to bless you. So He will. So He is.

And so Mary looked upon the God who looked upon her as she held Him in her arms. She later looked upon the God who looked upon her teaching the teachers as a twelve year old boy (Luke 2:41-51). She looked upon the God who looked upon her at a wedding in Cana, when He changed water into wine (John 2:1-11). And she looked upon the God who looked upon her as He hung dying on a cross (John 19:25). And she was blessed.

And one day we will see Him too. Now we see Him by faith in water and bread and wine. Now we hear Him by faith in His Word and Absolution. And we magnify the Lord and rejoice in Him who has looked upon us and blessed us.

And we learn this too: to regard others. That because our Lord has regarded us, maybe we start noticing those around us, and stop avoiding them, and maybe even get involved with them, and reconsider who is worth our attention, time, and effort. For the Lord who regards us has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts (Galatians 4:6), to give us new hearts, and new eyes, and new lives. That the blessing we have received flow out to others as well. And they too magnify the Lord. With us now, and with us forever.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.