

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 1:39-45 (46-56)

Year C - Advent 4, Text: Luke 1:39-45 (46-56)
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Prior to this pericope, in Luke 1:36, the angel Gabriel refers to Elizabeth as Mary's "relative" (NRSV) or "cousin" (NAB).

Verse 1:39: Luke's nativity narratives focus on the grand truth that, through Jesus' conception and entry into the world, the grand finale to God's plan of salvation for humanity breaks into history. Even before His birth, Jesus (whose name means "Yahweh saves") brings joy to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Mary travels about 80 to 90 miles south from Nazareth to the region of (today's) Ain Karim "with haste" — or, as the Greek word implies, "deep in thought" (with good reason!). Possibly, Mary also went south to help an aged relative, already six months pregnant. Perhaps she also wanted to consult with a mature, righteous person such as Elizabeth.

We are not told whether Mary had revealed her pregnancy secret to Joseph. According to Matthew 1:19, 20, when Mary eventually breaks the news to Joseph, he initially decides to terminate their relationship.

Verses 1:40–42: When Mary enters the home of her kinswoman and greets her, the child leaps in Elizabeth's womb and she is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, referred to so frequently in Luke's writings, reveals to Elizabeth the exalted mystery resting within the heart of her young relative. She cries out with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Of all women, Mary is the most favored by God (that is, God has shown his grace to her).

Verse 1:43: Elizabeth refers to Mary as "the mother of my Lord" — indeed, a profound profession!

Verses 1:44–45: Elizabeth states that at the moment she heard Mary's greeting, the babe in her womb leaped for joy. Remarkable! Even the unborn John the Baptist was, in some way, aware of what was taking place in Mary's life, and in the life of the world.

It would be interesting to know just how much Elizabeth really understood about the events that were taking place in the life of Mary, and what they would mean for the future history of the Jewish people and the world. Luke portrays Mary as a believer whose faith stands in contrast to the initial disbelief of Zechariah (1:20).

Verses 1:46–55: Although Mary is praised for being the mother of the Lord and because of her faith, she reacts as a *servant* in a psalm of praise — referred to as the Magnificat. The Magnificat makes no specific reference to Mary's pregnancy and her visit to Elizabeth (with the possible exception of v. 48). Its contents fit well with themes found elsewhere in Luke:

- Joy and exaltation in the Lord
- The lowly being singled out for God's favor
- The reversal of human fortunes
- The fulfillment of Old Testament promises