



REFERENCES

- [Micah 5:2-5a](#)
- [Hebrews 10:5-10](#)
- [Luke 1:39-45](#)
- [Luke 1:46b-55](#)

The story takes over this week. Let's just admit it. The story that we've learned and told and retold, the story that we've sentimentalized and Disney-fied, the story that has produced songs and dramas, movies and poems. And yet through it all, the story persists. The story draws. It defies explanation. It is an act of beauty and awe and is best met with open-mouthed wonder. God, our God, promised to be born in the flesh, like our flesh. It amazes when you stop to wonder again.

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That's the blessing the week promises: the blessing of wonder. The blessing that picks you up and sets you on your feet and gives you a new spirit for living. Live that blessing this week. Stand in awe of this story. Let a young woman read the text as if it were her story. Because it is! Go beyond the assigned verses and read Mary's song; let that be the psalm that is read this week, that is sung this week. It is a powerful word, a word of blessing and hope and promise. It is a threat to the status quo, to be sure; but everyone knows the status quo isn't working all that well. So, sing it: "The world is about to turn!" *The Canticle of the Turning*, (this is also the same link that goes to the webpage where a preview can be clicked on to hear and see the music.

<https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/canticle-of-the-turning-print-g7499#>)

written by Rory Cooney, with its lilting Irish tune tells this story well. It is a modern retelling of the Magnificat, Mary's song after being blessed by Elizabeth in her home. The refrain of the song makes it hard to keep still:

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. / Let the fires of your justice burn. / Wipe away all tears, / For the dawn draws near, / And the world is about to turn.

We are blessed by this promise; we are challenged and given hope by this promise. The blessing of home is the reminder that the gift of Christmas is ours and the world's both. So, bless one another as we sing, as we hear the story. Bless with laying on of hands, if we dare, if the protocols allow. Maybe the family units can bless one another, the couples and the close friends and find a connection to make during the service as a tactile blessing to hold on to. Or maybe, more safely, like Mary, we can ponder these things in our hearts as we remember that we are blessed. From this home, this promised home we call the kin-dom of God, we are blessed. Find a way, a safe way, to remind everyone of that blessing today.

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WEEK 4: THE BLESSING OF HOME

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Luke 1:39-45).



Image Credit: Corby Eisbacher from ArtByCorby

I have loved this picture of Mary and Elizabeth since the first time I saw it. In it, you can see how the women are rejoicing in each other's pregnancies, as they each touch the belly of the other. Joy leaps out of the picture in a palpable way. It reminds me that they were aunt and niece and probably quite close, since

Mary rushed to see her Aunt Elizabeth after learning Mary was pregnant. Based upon the ancient rules of hospitality, there is no doubt that Elizabeth welcomed Mary into her home and offered her food and drink. We have no record that indicates whether Elizabeth felt any concern that the young, unmarried, pregnant Mary showed up at her door. Scripture does tell us that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months.[1]

There is nothing quite like the smell of freshly baked cookies coming out of the oven! I have fond memories of baking Christmas cookies with my siblings as a child. There were always certain recipes that we pulled out only at Christmas time. Our favorite ones to make were sugar cookies! Each step in the process was so much fun: rolling out the round ball of dough; choosing whatever cookie cutter we liked; pressing it into the soft dough; carefully transferring it to the baking pan where we would decorate it with red and green sugar sprinkles. As the amount of dough we had to work with got smaller and smaller, we would roll the dough thinner and thinner to prolong the fun and make the most cookies we possibly could. On those last few trays, the cookies would always be so thin that they would get extra-brown on the edges.

We would make batches and batches of different types of cookies that my mother would box up, always including some of the ones we had decorated. She would deliver those boxes to friends and neighbors. I loved riding with her in the car on delivery day, singing Christmas songs as we went. We would ring people's doorbells and wish everyone a Merry Christmas. It was impossible to NOT feel merry on cookie delivery day!

Today, we reverse the traditions and expectations of hospitality shown in the ancient world. Bringing a small gift like flowers or a bottle of wine to someone when you visit is a tradition passed down from our parents for many of us. Our project this week follows today's rules of hospitality through baking and visiting someone.

Cookie Project: Bake cookies to share with someone you have not seen in a long time but wish to visit. Go and do it!

Weekly discussion questions:

- 1) What kind of cookies did you make and how did you choose this type?
- 2) To whom did you bring the cookies and why did you choose this person or these people? Describe the visit.

- 3) How has this project affected you? Your relationship with someone else? Your relationship with God?
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[1] *Feasting on the Word. Year C, 93.*