



Sunday, December 22, 2024  
Luke 1:39-55 (4th Sunday of Advent)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. This week I had the opportunity to take communion to a young man who is a member of the Latino ministry. This young man has special needs and for the past 4 years has been confined to his bed due to a fall that caused a fracture in his back.

Every time I go to his home, he waits for me with a big smile, excited to receive communion. If I arrive and spend too much time talking to his parents before going to his room, he begins to make loud noises. He knows that he is the reason I am at his home. When his parents and I hear the sound, we know that someone is getting angry and wants us to stop talking and go into his room so we can pray and he can receive communion.

The interesting thing about this young man's life is that before his family met Ascension, he had been rejected from receiving communion due to his condition. When the family asked for an explanation of why their son could not have his first communion, the answer they received was "He can not because of his condition. He does not know what he is going to take. He does not speak well." Yes, brothers and sisters, I said the same thing. That's crazy. This family spent years looking for a community where their son could be accepted, loved and able to receive communion. They found that community here.

Today this young man becomes angry at his pastor when his pastor goes a week or two without visiting him. He is very demanding, but a wonderful person. This week as I left his house and was heading to my vehicle, another young man who was shoveling snow on the sidewalk approached me and said, "Pastor, Pastor, could you please bless me?" And I asked him, "Why do you want to be blessed?" He said, "I don't know, I just want you to bless me?" I prayed for him and blessed him and a smile appeared on his face.

In the two previous Sundays of Advent, the Gospel has presented us with John the Baptist in the wilderness as the main character who proclaimed a message of repentance. Today, as we approach the end of the Advent season, the Gospel changes character and presents us with Mary as the central figure. Not only so that we remember the privileges that she had for having been the mother of the Savior, the mother of the Messiah, but above all the Gospel presents Mary as a model for all the disciples of the Lord.

Ten days ago, your three pastors woke up very early in the morning and joined the families from the Spanish ministry to remember and celebrate the Annunciation of the angel. Some of you joined this Spanish worship service to experience the story of the Annunciation in a new way.

At the Annunciation, Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit and received the good news that her relative Elizabeth was going to have a baby too. Mary, excited by the wonderful news she had received, decides to go to visit her relative, surely to congratulate her, share her news and take care of her for a few months, due to her advanced age.

It is surprising that Elizabeth expresses honor at Mary's visit. Elizabeth is an older woman living in a culture that values older people. Mary is young, most likely a teenager. She is the one who should show honor. But what is interesting is that when she arrived at Elizabeth's house, Elizabeth was also filled with the Holy Spirit and received her with joy and love, saying to her "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." The work that the Holy Spirit was already doing in Mary filled Elizabeth with joy and love.

And that is exactly what Christians are called to do. We are the messenger of good news. John the Baptist was the messenger of the good news. The Samaritan woman and the woman at the well became the messengers of the good news after their experience with the Lord. Mary Magdalene was the messenger of the good news of the



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resurrection. The disciples were messengers and sent to share the good news with the whole world. We are called to be messengers of joy, peace, hope and love wherever we are and wherever we go. Being a messenger of the good news means that our actions are in connection with what Jesus calls us to do.

Outside our walls, we are messengers of joy, peace, hope and love. Pastor Chris shared with me a story. They had some friends over for dinner, and one of the women shared an experience with him. She told him that at the school where she works, a group of teenagers cooked an amazing breakfast for the staff on one of their Professional Development days, came to school and set it up to look elegant, and the kids even came back to clean it up. They were amazed that there was a church with students like that. Pastor Chris asked her, “where do you work?” She told him Hawthorne. I’m sure you can imagine how proud Pastor Chris was at the moment when he could tell her that she was talking about Ascension’s CRASH students. The entire church was part of this event through donating the ingredients. You were a messenger of love to the teachers for the work that they are doing for our community.

This is not the only story of Ascension sharing the good news in our community. People cook meals for Healing Hearts on a regular basis, we donate to the Waukesha Food Pantry and our blessing box, we collect clothes for the men’s shelter, we sponsor families through the angel tree. We visit the homebound. We are bearers of the good news when we support the children of the schools in Tanzania and in El Salvador. We are bearers of a multicultural ministry where the grace of God is revealed in many ways and with many traditions that were never imagined to be carried out in this place, for example seeing a donkey walking around the building for Las Posadas. if that is not enough, seeing your three pastor walking with....Thank you. We will be bearers and witnesses also of the good news of the baptism of our sister Madelyn Nicole Farmer, who will be baptized in a few minutes.

Brothers and sisters, in this season of Advent, let us remember that despite our limitations and frailties, God has chosen us to share his Glory with others. Let the transforming power of the manger manifest itself through our lives. Because our soul glorifies the Lord!!

May the grace, hope, peace, Joy and love from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.