

# ***Christmas Fit for a King***

## ***The King of Life-Changing Joy***

### **December 11, 2022**

**Overarching Theme:** 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

#### **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

#### **Core Point:**

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming *“the year of the Lord’s favor”* is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

#### **Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 1:46b-55**

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”*

#### **Commentary:**

Just after her encounter with the angel Gabriel, Mary went to the hill country, to a village of Judea, to the house of Zechariah, to Elizabeth. Her haste may convey obedience, but since she was not told to go to Elizabeth, it is more likely an indication of joy and wonder. There is no question or doubt. The verbs convey the movement, the urgency, and the joy of her journey: Mary set out, went with haste, entered the house, and greeted Elizabeth. The meeting of the women is also accompanied by a sign: The

child in Elizabeth's womb leaps. She then explains the meaning of the movement of the babe in her womb. It was a leap of joy. The angel had promised Zechariah that he would have joy, and now joy has come to Elizabeth at the visitation of Mary. Her joy inspires a like response in Mary, who in her song of praise – the Magnificat – rejoices in God her Savior.

Verse 48 declares the reason for Mary's praise and identifies her with the lowly, foreshadowing both the promise of exaltation of the lowly later in the Magnificat and the fulfillment of this promise in the ministry of Jesus. The words of praise, however, speak of God's redeeming work not as future but as already having been fulfilled. Such is the confidence of faith. The overthrow of the powerful has not come about through the mounting up of the weak in rebellion but through the coming of God in the weakness of a child. The couplets describe the dramatic reversal that is the signature of God's mighty acts. The proud are scattered. The powerful are deposed. By contrast the lowly are exalted and the hungry are fed while the rich are sent away empty. According to the promises, the Lord has helped Israel to remember God's mercies. More than predictions of what is to come, the Magnificat praises God for the goodness of God's nature and the redemption that Israel and the church have experienced.

Adapted from the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, Vol IX, p. 54-55

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Why do you think God favored Mary's lowliness? How is humility related to being blessed?
2. How can we emulate Mary's humility and receptivity to God's gifts in daily life?
3. Looking back over God's past faithfulness to Israel and in her own life, Mary could declare "*the Mighty One has done great things for me.*" What great things has the "Mighty One" done for you personally? For us as a community of faith?
4. Mary's song helped her tap into God's gift of joy whether her circumstances were ideal or not. Is there a song that has helped you tap into a joy that is deeper than your circumstances? Share with your group.

**Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 1:46b-48 *"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;*