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Sermon: December 20, 2015  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“LOVE FOR US”**  
Luke 1:46-55

{Jn 3:16} **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**

{Ro 5:8, 10} **“God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners” – “while we were God’s enemies” – “Christ died for us.”**

{Ro 8:7-8} He **“died for us”** despite the fact that **“the sinful mind is hostile to God”** and **“those controlled by the sinful nature [are incapable of pleasing] God.”**

{1 Jn 4:10} **“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”**

For some, this message holds scant wonder: ‘Well, duh. Of course God loves me. What’s not to love?’

Surely, no one here has ever said that in so many words. But have you ever thought it? I have. Sometimes, I still do.

Lord, have mercy! Save us from presumption.

For some, this message is unconvincing: ‘God knows everything about me *and* still loves me? Yeah, right!’

Maybe you have never voiced that out loud. But have you ever thought it? I have. Sometimes, I still do.

Lord, have mercy! Save us from disbelief.

□ Please turn with me to Luke 1:46-55.

{Lk 1:41} The Virgin Mary has just arrived at the home of her kinswoman Elizabeth. Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist, and when Mary greets her, John “[leaps] **for joy**” **“in [her] womb”**.

{Lk 1:41} **“Filled with the Holy Spirit,”** Elizabeth discerns that Mary herself is pregnant with the Messiah and she acclaims her for her faith. Mary replies with this, her song of praise.

You can pore over the Magnificat with a fine-tooth comb from now until Christmas, and you will not find the word “love.” Nevertheless, it is a stunning declaration of God’s love.

It inspires awe and demolishes presumption. It gives birth to confidence as it banishes disbelief.

■ In verse **50** Mary proclaims, **“His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.”**

📖 This **“fear”** is not terror; it is awe, reverence, veneration. These who **“fear”** YHWH demonstrate profound respect for the LORD in words of adoration, acts of worship, and deeds of obedience, as should we all.

These are the kind of people we might be tempted to excuse for feeling complacent about God’s love. If anyone deserves it, it is them!

But how does Mary describe God’s care for **“those who fear him”**? He **“extends” “his mercy to”** them. Someone might reply, ‘Why wouldn’t he be merciful to them? They have earned it.’

That is just it. They have not earned it.

📖 Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown to someone whom one has the power to punish or harm.

God is perfectly good. He is not capable of injustice and he has no desire to inflict harm. Hence, his mercy always entails pardon for those who merit punishment and generous aid for those who do not merit assistance.

{Is 64:4} **“His mercy extends to those who fear him”** precisely because every human being, even the most decent, is in desperate need of it. All, without exception, are **“like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”**

{Ro 3:23; 6:23} The inescapable reality is that **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** Furthermore, **“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

✚ Isn't this love: that God is merciful when our best is not good enough?

■ Moving on to verse 52, Mary proclaims that the Lord **“has lifted up the humble.”**

Acutely aware as they are of their own lowliness, **“the humble”** depend on God in every part of their life. In relation to others they are unassuming and unpretentious.

In a highly competitive world that puts a premium on self-sufficiency, self-promotion, and public image **“the humble”** are radically counter-cultural. A lot of us admire them for their meekness, *in principle* – but only a few dare to actually live like them.

{1 Sam 16:7, NLT} That is understandable. If “the squeaky wheel gets the grease,” modesty can be costly.

And since **“People judge by outward appearances,”** the failure to cultivate the “right” image can lead to dishonor.

{Php 2:6-9} But consider Messiah. Though he is

**in very nature God, [he]**

**did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**

**rather, he made himself nothing**

**by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**

As if that was not sacrificial enough,

**he humbled himself [further]**

**by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!**

**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place**

**and gave him the name that is above every name.**

{Mt 18:14} Though Jesus is uniquely glorious, he sets the pattern for all who would follow him. In his kingdom **“all... who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

✚ Isn't this love: that God exalts us in our humiliation?

■ In contrast, verse 51b, God **“has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.”**

It has been said that “Pride goes before a fall.” This is normally a natural process: conceit leads to careless and evokes resentment in those around us; carelessness causes mistakes, and resentment provokes sabotage.

Then again, YHWH sometimes intervenes to trip up the arrogant. The LORD does not do this maliciously. His intent is not to rub our face in our own mess; it is to save us from ourselves.

“**The wages of [every] sin is death,**” but none is deadlier than pride. That is why it is always the first on the list of the Seven Deadly Sins.

☑ {Karl Olsson} “**The seven sins are the sources of all sins and the root sin of the seven is... pride.**” Every sin springs from, or is facilitated by, pride.

Isn't it better to endure the temporary pain of being knocked down a few pegs now, when there is time to receive life, than to go to the grave puffed up with false pride and endure death for all eternity?

☞ Isn't this love: that God humbles us in our pride?

■ Next, in verse 53a, God “**has filled the hungry with good things.**”

You and I are creatures of need. Depending on the environment we can survive about three weeks without food, three or four days without water, and three minutes without oxygen.

Thank God, he has placed us on this good earth! It contains everything we need to survive and thrive. The LORD continues to endow us with amazing intellectual, creative, and physical aptitudes to meet our needs, and he grants us opportunities to exercise those capacities.

{Mt 5:45} He does so not because we are good, but because he is good. Our “**Father in heaven... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous**” alike.

{Jn 10:10} Material provision points to the ways he meets our deeper hunger for significance, joy, love, and hope. YHWH pours out an abundance of spiritual blessings so we “**may have life, and have it to the full.**”

The greatest of these blessings is the original Christmas gift: the Incarnation of the Son, the earthly life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

☞ Isn't this love: that God satisfies us our deepest needs?

■ In contrast, Luke 1:53b, “**he has sent the rich away empty.**”

God is bighearted and openhanded. He gives us more than we need and better than we deserve, frequently without being asked.

The tragedy is that we so easily confuse the Giver with his material gifts. We are inclined to seek security, satisfaction, and life itself in the provision rather than the Provider.

This ultimately ends in disappointment. Money and possessions can benefit us, but they are not God. They cannot bear the weight of our false expectations.

When we pour our hearts into idols, God does not step in on their behalf. He withholds the goodness only he can give.

His intent is to save us from ourselves. Isn't it better to experience emptiness now, while there is still time to receive him, than to go to the grave bloated with false satisfaction and endure eternal starvation?

✠ Isn't this love: that God allows us to be dissatisfied with what does not give life?

Depending on the moment it is easy to take for granted that God loves us or, conversely, to disbelieve it. Yet the Magnificat inspires awe and demolishes presumption, gives birth to confidence and banishes disbelief.

May this song, inspired the Holy Spirit, speak to us. And may we hear it!

Luke 1:46-55 is the word of the LORD.