**Luke 1-46-55, Dec 22, 2025 Advent 4 LOVE - "A Bun in the Oven”**

**Written by Rev. Susan Cole, revised by Rev. Anita Spiller**

I have the joy of meeting with 3 incredible pastors each week. We rise very early in the morning and meet at 6 am before the sun wakes up. We read and discuss the week’s scripture, and we pray for one another. Almost every week one of them will say something about the text that makes we go “yes” or “wow” or “I have never thought about it that way before”. This past week was no different. The sermon that follows is the brilliance of Rev. Susan Cole with my musings thrown in. It’s a preachers mashed up. I am deeply grateful that she has given her permission to share it with you today. It is called “A Bun in the Oven!”

I remember when I was expecting my first born. I had a list on the fridge entitled, “Things to do before the baby arrives.” I also remember that months after my son Greg was born, that list was still on the fridge, only a few of the many items completed. That’s really how it goes with life, you have ideas and make plans based on what you expect things to be like, based on your memories, stories others have told you, and sometimes your own experiences, but really, it all comes down to the fact that we don’t know the future and we can’t wrap our minds around the future because the future doesn’t exist. Life can only ever be experienced and lived in the NOW, the present moment. So that list really should have been an ongoing list of suggestions called “What on this list can I do NOW, if anything?” Of course, the opportunity to act in the NOW extended long after the baby arrived. That was over 28 years ago, and I’m pretty sure there are things on that list that never got done…but it looks like we all survived regardless.

Have you ever heard that joke, “If you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans for the future”? Ha ha. It comes from the old Yiddish adage, “Mann Tracht, Un Gott Lacht” which translates to, “Man plans, and God laughs.”

I’m not sure Mary would have been laughing along with God when she stood, engaged but not married, in front of the angel Gabriel who was telling her she would be visited by the Holy Spirit and would then give birth to the Messiah, the long-awaited Saviour of her people, but she did accept God’s call for her.

After she accepted God’s call by saying, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” she ran off to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was already 6 months pregnant. Elizabeth labelled herself the way her community had labeled her, “old and barren." But God had other plans and often works in mysterious and surprising ways. Gabriel reassured Mary, “…nothing will be impossible with God.”

Mary arrived at Elizabeth’s and immediately the baby in Elizabeth’s womb responded. Scripture tells us:

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 your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

Mary’s life had certainly taken a turn, and Gabriel’s announcement had mixed things up, but Mary responded by accepting and then celebrating the JOY that she would have felt knowing the Messiah was on his way at last!

Mary responded with her song of praise. And this is how it goes:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
    and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowly state 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;
indeed, 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 imagination 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 come to the aid of his child Israel,
    in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
    to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Mary not only had “a bun in the oven,” she was pregnant with the Messiah, her song of praise was also “a bun in the oven,” a prophecy, hope for the future, possibility waiting to be realized…or perhaps some of it was already in action. Mary sang about God’s way…the ingredients God uses; a lowly servant…God’s way of mixing things up…and God’s way of challenging humanity to do better.

In the time of Mary, humanities’ recipe for salvation would have been something like this: miraculous arrival of divine Messiah, who is a strong soldier in charge of a large army, the army attacks and overthrows Caesar and the Roman army and people are saved! But what they experienced was something that many might have viewed as a failure.

God sometimes turns things upside down. And Mary sings of this upside downness in her song of praise. Humanity plans, and God laughs. This Messiah would not arrive in the world as a grown man, but as a vulnerable baby. And he would not be a prince born to a rich and powerful family in a palace, even though people still insist on calling him a prince, a king, a lord. The Messiah would be the son of a lowly servant…a baby born in a barn and placed in a manger.

I think it’s quite possible that many people in Mary’s day, believed that with the arrival of the Messiah, things would instantly and magically improve. But how could they if the Messiah was a baby? Salvation might not even come for those who were alive and older at the time of Jesus’s birth. They would have to wait until the baby grew up to be a strong leader. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Was that all God’s people were expected to do? Wait for the coming of the Messiah, and now wait for him to grow up to be a man?

It’s not easy to wait. Especially when you are baking. I confess, I’m a bit of a batter eater. I hate having to wait for the final product. Let’s watch this video called “Don’t eat the butter.”

Play video

While meant to be a joke, there is truth in the difficulty of waiting for our Savour to come. If we can see the Messiah, Jesus, for what he is, the embodiment of PRESENCE, God’s presence in the world, things can and do instantly improve. Many people are still stuck on the idea that our salvation comes from an outside force, the same way a struggling princess might wait for her knight in shining armour to rescue her, when in fact, all she needs to do is believe in herself and her own abilities to realize her salvation is in her control and she herself, connected with God within her, has the ability to find liberation.

It is through living in PRESENCE that we find our salvation from suffering.

But even as we wait, or let go and let God, or accept and embrace remaining aware, available and attentive to God in our lives, we often don’t like God’s call for us, even if we long for the results of that call.

Is God’s call too inconvenient and too transformative for us? We often say, or at least we think it quietly to ourselves, “God, I will follow you, I will even do it your way, but please, don’t ask me to change or give up anything!” It’s not even possible to follow God and not be transformed.

We want to celebrate with Mary, and believe that her prophecy is a window into our future, a future when:

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.

But not if it means **we** are the powerful who will be brought down, or **we** are the rich who will be sent away empty. We want the magnificat to be true, but not if it’s going to inconvenience us, challenge us, cause things to be mixed up and turned around, not if we have to change the way we think, do, live, are.

What are we called to do if we are to follow Mary, the model of faithful discipleship? What do we hope for by following God’s way?

What are we hoping will happen as more and more people accept the way the Universe unfolds and live in the present moment?

Like God turned the lives of Mary and Elizabeth upside down, let us be open to surprises in our lives where God calls us to see things differently, and be open to change and transformation.

Like Mary sings, not of the future, but of the NOW, what God is doing in her and her people’s lives right NOW, let us acknowledge what God is doing in the NOW in our lives. Mary sings not of promises to be hoped for but promises fulfilled. Mary sees that God is not just waiting for a bun in the oven to be ready, or for the Messiah to grow up and save them, Mary sings of what God is doing right NOW. Mary sings of God’s blessings not only to her, but to all people. Mary sings of the blessings of God’s activity in the world that extends beyond this story, beyond the boundaries of time and space and into all our stories. The kin-dom of heaven, the way God wants us to live, is in the NOW.

Mary’s song holds in it a revolutionary message from God. Janet Knight is the retired editor of “Pockets,” a magazine for children published by The Upper Room, and she writes,

“God’s revolutionary message has power for those of us whom poverty, oppression, and extreme violence are not part of our daily existence. It calls us to a passion for justice for all the poor and the oppressed of the world, a passion that may result in our sacrificing material wealth, power, or influence…Where does God’s revolutionary message call you?”

My prayer for this week is that you might listen to what God is whispering to you. Leaning in to hear about the kind of world God intends, where everyone is cared for, everyone matters, and everyone receives God’s shalom. A world of hope, peace, joy and love. May you embrace the final few days of waiting until the Christ child is born to us. Thanks be to God. Amen