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December 20, 2009

Micah 5:2-5a

Luke 1:39-55

By Thy Spirit

Merry Christmas! Suddenly, it seems, we are within a week

It's so easy to get caught up in the hectic pace of the season! So much "stuff" is expected these days! Especially for parents, it seems like there is a lot of pressure to make it a perfect Christmas for the young children, and even the not-so-young children! The commercial hype would have us believe that the only way to make Christmas perfect is to give the kids everything they want, and this can be very stressful!

Or maybe you have elderly parents and you don't know how many more Christmases they will be around, and you want what might be their last Christmas to be wonderful!

Those are not bad goals, really. They are unselfish and loving.

But if we get too rushed and distracted by too many things, then everybody loses out.

In today's passage from Luke, we read about what happened when Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, got together while they were pregnant.

Elizabeth had waited a long time for a baby. She undoubtedly had things to do, a routine that she had developed to keep her busy. I doubt she just sat home all day and moped! And then, suddenly, just when she thought it was too late for babies, she was pregnant!

She didn't run out and tell everyone her good news right away! Instead, she went into seclusion for five months! She took her time, she gave herself time to adjust to this change in her life, not by frantically running around trying to finish everything on her to-do list, but by spending time by herself.

I have no way of knowing for sure, but I think she was spending time with God, expressing her gratitude for the gift of her child, getting close to God and strengthening her awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Because as soon as she saw Mary coming to her house, her unborn baby, the future John the Baptist, did a somersault, and then she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

By the Spirit of God, she recognized that the baby her cousin Mary was carrying was the son of God!

Yes, the first person to recognize that the son of Mary was also the Son of God was Elizabeth!

Elizabeth's reaction was to burst into song, the words that we read in Luke.

And Mary's reaction was another song, one that we commonly refer to as the Magnificat!

Filled with the Holy Spirit, these two women broke into song! Their joy was so great it went beyond words and needed music to be more fully expressed.

Both of them gave God the glory----By thy Spirit, God, these things are happening to us, even though we are poor, ordinary women.

Elizabeth's song is a recognition of the holiness of Mary's baby and how blessed Mary is because she believed what the angel had told her.

Mary's song, on the other hand, is revolutionary, a prophecy of how much her baby boy would change the world!

God was about to do extraordinary things through these two ordinary women by the power of the Holy Spirit, and their spirit-filled reaction was to sing!

And what is **our** reaction to the joy we feel because they allowed the Holy Spirit to work in them, and because the Holy Spirit is working in us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord?

The same----we sing! Christmas doesn't seem like
Christmas without Christmas Carols! By the Spirit of God, we
sing! And sing and sing and sing!

In a minute the choir will sing a cantata for us that will tell the
Christmas story using song. Music expresses our joy in a way that
words cannot.

Music, by the spirit of God, reaches our souls in a way that words
rarely do.

Come, Holy Spirit, come, and lead us into a deeper relationship
with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Come into our hearts until
we cannot do anything else but sing!

Amen.

