

The Lutheran Church of the Atonement
Florissant, Missouri
All Saints Sunday -- Year C
November 5-6, 2022
Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Ephesians 1:11-23
St. Luke 6:20-31

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty,..." and so forth. And, by now some of you recognize the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. (or)

"I have endeavored in this Ghostly little book, to raise a Ghost of an idea, which shall not put my readers out of humor with themselves, with each other, with the Season, or with me." Perhaps, a few of you recognized (or suspected) that that was Charles Dickens' introduction to "A Christmas Carol." (or)

"In the desire and with the purpose of making the truth clear, a setting forth of theses will be held on the propositions shown below at Wittenburg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther,...." Yes, I know that we observed Reformation Sunday last weekend, but I couldn't resist the temptation to quote from the preface to Luther's famous 95 Theses.

But, why? Simply to point out that, at or near the beginning of an important document, many a writer will spell out in advance his or her reason for preparing the document, will give you a sense of what is to follow, and will set you up (if you will) to catch on quickly to where his or her story is doing to lead you.

Dare I suggest that this is how Mary's Magnificat functions in Luke's Gospel, ...that Luke uses the Magnificat as a preamble, a preface, an introduction to "clue us in" to where the story of Jesus is going? Right there in Chapter One Luke sets us up to discover how, in Jesus, God's "mercy is certain

from generation to generation for those who reverence God, how the deeds of his right arm will disclose God's might, how he will scatter the proud and the arrogant, how he will bring down the mighty from their thrones but will exalt those whom others look down on, how he will satisfy the hungry with good things while sending the rich away empty-handed, how Jesus will accomplish God's purpose for Israel (God's servant) firm in God's promises to Israel's forefathers, for God has not forgotten to show mercy to Abraham and to all of Abraham's descendants forever."

The Magnificat then sets the stage for the story that Luke wants his readers (namely, us) to be on the lookout for, that story of how God, in Jesus, is turning the world right-side-up;...how God, in Jesus, is launching his Kingdom project to put the world right,...how God, in Jesus, is creating a new people, so that God's will will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

As Luke then tells the story of Jesus, I suspect that Luke anticipates that his readers will remember his preamble and thus not be surprised when Jesus calls to account "the proud and the arrogant," namely, the religious and political powerbrokers of his day;...when Jesus lifts up those whom others look down on, by sharing table fellowship with tax collectors and public sinners;...when Jesus satisfies the hungry with good things, by providing a satisfying meal -- and then some -- to thousands in the wilderness who have nothing to eat;...when Jesus discloses God's might, by calming a violent storm at sea;...when Jesus remembers God's mercy for the children of Abraham and for all who reverence God, over and over and over again, by healing and restoring and forgiving all who turn to him;...until finally, in remembrance of God's promises, Jesus fulfills God's purpose for Israel (God's servant) by laying down His life "as a ransom for many."

This, then, is Luke's story, anticipated in the Magnificat and brought to life in the story of Jesus. This is the story of how God, in Jesus, is turning the world right-side-up, is launching his Kingdom project to put the world right, and is -- in the process -- creating a new people, so that God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the story of God, in Jesus, showing love in the face of hatred, mercy in the presence of malice, and forgiveness in the place of shame, giving the gift of life in a world filled with death.

All of which finally brings us to this morning's Gospel Lesson, the Gospel Lesson for All Saints. For, in this Lesson, Jesus turns to all those who've been following him (not just the Twelve) but to the multitudes who had come out to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and Jesus initiates them (if you will) into his new community of turn the world-right-side-up people, his new community of Kingdom people, his new community of "thy will be done on earth as in heaven" people. Indeed, Jesus's words on that occasion were all about turning the world right-side-up, echoing Luke's preamble in the Magnificat: as the poor supplant the mighty on the thrones of the Kingdom; as the hungry are satisfied; as those looked-down-on will rejoice and leap for joy; while the arrogant, the proud, and self-satisfied will mourn and weep.

And, then, Jesus gives those turn-the-world-right-side-up people their turn-the-world-right-side-up commission: to return hatred with love, to return curses with blessings, to resist every impulse to retaliate; and, to provide for all those who ask for help.

And, who are these turn-the-world-right-side-up people? Who are these "receive the Kingdom" people? Who are these "on earth as in heaven" people? Well, Daniel calls them, "the holy ones of the Most High." St. Paul simply calls us "saints."

Yes, the function of a preamble is to set the stage for the story that follows, to create expectation and anticipation for what is to come. So, yes, I believe that Luke uses Mary's Magnificat as a preamble to "clue us in" to where the story of Jesus is going, as God turns the world right-side-up. But, no less, I believe, Luke uses the story of Jesus itself as a preamble, as a preamble, setting the stage for the story of God's Holy Ones, ...as a preamble, creating expectation and anticipation for the story of God's saints, each one of us, now commissioned as Kingdom people, to carry forward Jesus's glorious work of turning God's world right-side-up. Amen