

I have good news...and bad news...

By Ana & Tod Gobledale

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-55

Note: Mary pauses when listening to her mother.

Narrator: Pray with me. God of Love, may the words of our mouths and the thoughts of all our hearts be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer.

Let us listen in on a phone conversation between a young girl and her mother.

Mary: *(holding a phone to her ear)*

Hi Mom, I am calling from the city.

I will explain what I am doing here in a moment.

Mom, I have some good news... and some bad news.

Mom, I know you and Dad were really looking forward to my wedding with Joe: the ceremony, the celebration, the dancing and festivities. Well...

Joe and I have decided not to have a big wedding.

Mom, That IS the good news...

You and Dad will not have to shell out a lot of money to rent a venue and pay for all that food and wine.

What? If that is the Good News, what is the bad news?!

Weelll..., a little problem has popped up.... I am pregnant.

Mo-ommm..., it is not so bad. AND, I am not the first teenager in the world to get in the family way.

Mom, Mom, stop saying, "Joe! That dirty old man!" Joseph had nothing to do with it! Honestly, mom, I do not know how this happened! But, I am pregnant.

There is a light shining in all this darkness...and that is Joe! Sweet, sensitive, amazing Joe. His love for me continues to make me want to weep tears of joy.

Mom, most men, at best, would break off the engagement when they found their fiance pregnant with someone else's child.

And at worst... some men would have me stoned!

Joe just gathers me in his arms. He holds me in his heart.

He promises to take me as his wife, pregnant and all.

Joseph is nothing less than a saint.

So, what am I doing in the city? Apart from not wanting you and Dad to give me the grief over being pregnant? I had this urge to visit cousin Liz.

Yes, Elizabeth your niece, your brother's daughter.

Yes, mom, cousin Liz has always been very understanding and accepting of me. That is why I am here.

Remember, Liz is married to that odd, little man, Zechariah the priest. Mother, do not get your knickers in a knot over my description of Zechariah. Admit it, he really IS odd. AND, I have heard YOU say to Dad that anyone who marries a priest must have been badly bitten by the love bug and parted with their good senses.

Why am I calling Zechariah odd today? Well, when I arrived at Liz's place I received a hearty welcome from her. Zechariah had a big smile for me, too, but he did not say anything! I thought, "That is odd." I asked Liz, "What is with him?"

Liz says that Zechariah has not said a word since the last time he was burning incense at the altar. Mom, that was weeks ago! All the folks around here say Zechariah saw a vision in the temple, whatever that means? For now, he has been rendered speechless. He will not-- or cannot-- say a word. How odd is that?

But, that is not the big news from my old, cousin Liz. Remember how you always thought she would never have a child? YES! She is also expecting! I guess Zechariah being

rendered speechless found other things to do! What is that? Too bad he did not lose his voice years ago? Mother!

Anyway, what a pair ancient Liz and I make. She, almost forty and me only fourteen waddling around the market shopping, both of us pregnant.

Mom, here is another strange story. Liz says she felt her baby quicken and kick in her womb when I arrived and she heard my "Hello!" Liz broke into a song of blessing for me and my baby-to-be. She said she was not sure what she was singing. But at the same time, she knew those were exactly the right words to say. She says my baby will be a fulfilment of God, someone special.

Hmmm, I have a feeling that all children are a fulfilment of God, all children are special.

Mom, was it like this for you when you were expecting me?

Pause...

What? I am over my morning sickness. These days I am filled with energy and euphoria. Yes, I know these are not the best of times.

Yes, I know terrible things happen in our country.

Yes, I know life will be a challenge for me and my child.

Still, my heart sings.

Mom, carrying this new life, I feel multiplied.

I feel as though I enlarge upon God, or perhaps I see God enlarged, magnified. Mom, I told you how Liz broke into song at my arrival... Weeelll... in response to Liz's song of greeting a song sprang from **my** lips!

I just knew that all the bad things of this world,
all the brokenness, all the suffering, all the loss,
all the injustice, all the pain and sorrow
would be swept away by God.

What did I sing, mom?

Let me see if I can remember...

My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

God has looked with favour on the lowliness of this servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One has done great things for me
and holy is God's name.

God's mercy is for those who revere God from generation to generation. The arm of God has shown God's strength.

God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

God has brought down the powerful from their thrones.

God has lifted up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty. God has helped the servants,
and in God's mercy, they are remembered.

I know, mom, I know. The last part of the song IS in the past tense, as if these things have already come to pass. They have not, but even in the darkness, I see God's light shine for me.

Mom, I know I should feel frightened to be so young and to be pregnant.

But, instead, I feel confident, buoyed by love.

Mom, I should be rejected by my betrothed, I should be cast out by society because I am unmarried and expecting, but, instead, I am gathered in; gathered in by Joe, even though I am not carrying his child.

Joe embraces me as his beloved, betrothed, wife to be.

And I am gathered in by my cousin, Elizabeth,
by her extravagant welcome and words of blessing.

Mom, whatever my child turns out to be,
she—or he-- will be greatly loved.
Cousin Liz talks about this child being a fulfilment of God.
What better fulfilment can there be than to love a child?

And each one of us IS a child,
a child of parents, and a child of God.
Our destiny, our fate, our very lives,
ALL, is to know that we are loved
and to love others as we are loved.
Amazing.

Mom, I know sometimes I am a disappointment to you.
I know that things have not always turned out for me the way
you would have liked.

What?

Mom, that is the nicest thing you could have said.
I love you and Dad, too. You are a great mom.

Oh, Mom, I am really craving your chicken soup.
Could you please send the recipe?
You are the best. Love you, too. Bye.

Narrator:

The candle of love burns even in the longest of nights.
And the darkness shall not overcome it.
God is love. Even in the bleakness of our world,
We can turn to love again this Advent season
And open our hearts to Christ's arrival anew.
Pray with me,

Power of Love,
Thank you for using each of us to bring your reign into
fruition. For using the young and inexperienced; for using the
old and wise. For giving us strength to face seemingly
insurmountable odds. For creating human community to share
your love and light with others. Use us in the days and weeks
ahead to shine your light, through our faith and witness, into
the world and the lives of those we encounter along the way.
This we pray through the Light of the World, Emmanuel.
Amen.