

The Declaration of a Revolution

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, our world is very full of stress and sorrows and trials.

And we have scarcely the capacity to live the lives in the midst of all that's going on. And it's very easy for us to lose our way.

And so as we, as your people, stand in your presence, read your word, and think on it.

Will you, Lord Jesus, by your Spirit, stand among us in your risen power? And by that Spirit, interpret your word to all the needs and longings of our hearts.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[1 : 11] I want you to turn to Luke chapter 1, verse 46.

And I want to explain to you that beginning this morning and going almost till Easter, I'm going to be preaching from the gospel according to St. Luke and dealing with various passages.

You will have in your hand, I hope, by next Sunday a list of which passages are going to be covered on which Sunday. But while I'm preaching, and there will be exceptions when Archie and Ernie are preaching, I will be dealing with the gospel according to St. Luke.

And I'm beginning this morning with a part of the gospel which is, in a sense, a prologue to the gospel, part of the prologue to the gospel. And in the very familiar words that we know as the Magnificat and that takes part in evening service all the time.

But it's the words of Mary when she stands, as it seems, on the threshold of the house of her cousin Elizabeth.

[2 : 41] And she comes to almost a spontaneous outburst of praise and thanksgiving, which is full of prophetic elements, and which we, if you have been an Anglican all your life, you have sung over and over and over again.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. The whole feminist movement could take, and I'm sure do take, great care to look at this because it has, in a sense, it's a woman's perspective on the person of Jesus.

And that's a responsibility that falls on all of us as Christians. But it's more than that.

It's a very profound kind of passage, and I hesitate to bring it to you for fear that you would ignore it, or you would say you'd heard it all before.

And it's very apparent to me that very few people have ever heard it, if hearing it implies doing it.

And this is the situation that we find ourselves in.

[4 : 20] So, besides, I'm feeling a little sad this morning. And just, I guess, with the burden of the circumstances of the parish, nothing serious, mind you.

We'll still be in business next week. But I think I should warn you of that simply because I think there is great joy and peace that comes from the study of Scripture.

Scripture. And I expect to find great joy in sharing it with you. And I trust you will find great joy in hearing it and assimilating it into your own life.

But I want to tell you where I'm starting from. And so you can discount me and put your whole attention on the Word.

And so it begins, verse 46. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

[5 : 28] You should read it with me down to verse 50, I guess. For he has regarded the lowly state of his hand.

For behold, it is for all generations to call him blessed. For he who is mighty and stuck free and made his holy, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. There's something deeply personal about this. It's Mary talking from the profound depths of her own experience.

Being with child and knowing that that child is to be the Savior, Jesus Christ.

I suppose one of the... In one of Paul's prayers, I think, for the Galatians, he prays for them that Christ may be formed in them.

[6 : 42] And it's like a picture, I think, of pregnancy, of Christ being formed in the womb of Mary, and of Christ being formed in the womb of our hearts, so to speak, that he will come to birth in us, that we will come to new birth in him.

And so it's a profound experience. And it's marked by something which I think is one of the most beautiful realities of human life, that when my soul doth magnify the Lord, the Lord magnifies me. In other words, I become important as he becomes important. I gain in stature and in significance. I become more fully a person as I more fully give myself to worship him.

And this personal expression which Mary makes is full of that. My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Rejoices because he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden.

[8 : 11] The apparent nothingness of this girl from Nazareth. Behold, from henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And that's a magnificent picture of personal worship of God, which I hope is reflected in each of our hearts.

That sense of Christ being formed in us and of our being able to praise God in the anticipation of what he is doing, in the remembrance of what he has done, and in the hope of the fulfillment of what he is going to do.

So becoming a Christian is a little like becoming pregnant. You can work that one over and think about it in terms of these verses.

But it's a wonderful reality which in itself brings joy. So if you're looking at the personal dimension of Christian faith, then those are the verses to look at from the Magnificat.

[9 : 48] But then it goes on to another level. Some call it the moral and social and economic level. Because what is happening here is that God is initiating a revolution.

Now that's not unusual to us because the news brings us information of revolutions being initiated in various parts of the world all the time.

We're really very good at initiating revolutions and carrying them forward. And we've seen it.

And, you know, if you can just give people enough machine guns, a revolution can be initiated and the world will soon be free.

And the wonder of it all just fills us with worship and awe. Awe. It doesn't, does it. But, I mean, that's what we think it should do.

[11 : 01] But this is another kind of revolution that is being initiated. And it's not being initiated now in the light of these political circumstances or this political circumstances.

It's not being initiated because of the tyranny of this leader or the poverty of this section of people or the oppression of these people. It is being initiated in order to establish a kingdom and that this kingdom is not of this world and this revolution will not be over until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ forever and ever.

That's the nature of the revolution that is being initiated here. That's the only ultimately significant revolution.

Somebody has written that one of the great difficulties about revolution is that you can't afford to leave them in the hands of the revolutionaries because their goals are so limited, their objectives are so tyrannical, and the fact is that they are simply going to create anew the problems that they are setting out to overcome so that you can't leave the work of revolution in the hands of the revolutionaries.

And there's another wisdom which is part of the Magnificat, and that is that the revolution whereby the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ is not going to happen in three months or three years or 40 years.

[13 : 00] It is the revolution which is going to involve the whole of history, which is going to involve every language and every culture and every nation and every people.

And it's a revolution which is only going to be completed when the name of Jesus is above every other name and every creature shall bow and give praise and worship to him.

That's when the revolution will be finished. That's the nature of the revolution that in the prologue of the Gospel of Luke, Mary announced by saying, My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath

rejoiced in God my Savior.

And the nature of this revolution is described if you turn to page or to verse 51. Read with me, will you, to the end of verse 53.

This is the nature of the revolution. His mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his heart, and the good desire.

[14 : 15] He has scattered with the proud and the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty of their brothers and has exalted those who look to the green.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent him to the good. That's it. That's the revolution. And that's how it's going to come.

He has shown strength with his heart is by some commentators interpreted to mean that the strength of his heart is revealed in the person of the Messiah.

And in the person of Jesus Christ, he has scattered the proud and the imagination of their hearts.

All the proud thoughts of men as they establish their empires, as they build their kingdoms, as they impose their tyrannies, as they take over the lives of people and subject them to bondage and to slavery.

All that proud imagination is going to be smashed by the revealing of the strong arm of God. And he's going to scatter them and their pride.

[15 : 35] There's going to come nothing of it. And you see, pride is the thing that compels men. Pride is the thing that motivates men.

Pride is the thing that causes men to scramble and to kill and to destroy and to ravage. That's the thing as they dream their dreams and seek to find by the force of their own arms and their guns and planes and tanks and all the hatred and violence that they can engender.

All that is in order to achieve those plans which in their pride they believe is going to bring to men something that they have never had before when in fact it's only going to bring them back to what they have never been without.

Violence and death and bloodshed and tyranny and all those plans of proud men are going to be scattered when this kingdom comes.

Then he goes on to say he's put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree. Those are the poor.

[16 : 57] And it's not poor in the sense that they are destitute and without money and without food. It's the poor who recognize that the kingdom that we seek the city we journey to the promised land that we conceive of in accordance with the promise of scripture isn't ours.

And that's why those are the people of low degree and the tyrants who hold sway under the prince of the power of darkness they will be put down from their thrones and the exalted will be those of low degree the poor.

That's what the that's why it starts blessed are the poor in spirit because the kingdom belongs to them and the kingdom will be theirs.

and if you sit in this pew this morning with any other awareness than that of being somebody who is poor and starved and hungry and deprived because the kingdom which you long for has not come in its fullness then you're in the wrong place.

If you're here to exercise the imagination of your heart and to dream your personal dreams of power and authority and the fulfillment of the pride of your heart you're in the wrong place because those dreams will never find fulfillment.

[19 : 08] because of the purpose of our God which is announced in the perpetual revolution which is established and heralded by this virgin girl in the village of Nazareth as she greets her cousin Elizabeth.

53 says he's filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away.

The whole thing is reversed. He hath put down the mighty from their thrones exalted those of low degree or to say it in another way he's filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away.

It's important to remember that St. Luke look for yourself back to the beginning of chapter 1 verse 1 of things which have been accomplished among us just as they were delivered to us by those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.

It seemed good to me also having followed all these things closely for some time past to write an account for you most excellent Theophilus that you may know the truth concerning the thing of

which you have been informed.

[21 : 05] Remember he's writing this letter to a nobleman and to a Roman in all probability and a person in high position of government authority and he's not announcing to them that there's soon to be a little rebellion in a remote Roman province of Palestine he's announcing to him that the Roman Empire need not be threatened by this because this kingdom and this revolution is of an entirely different order.

It's something which is uniquely different than anything that has ever happened. He's not expecting battalions of Roman soldiers to come out and suppress it.

Even though people have always feared that the Christian church is basically motivated politically. And it is not.

The kingdom which we seek is the kingdom of our God and of his Christ and that kingdom will come as it is described here when he reveals the strength of his arm he scatters the proud and the imagination of their hearts he puts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of low degree fills the hungry with good things and the richer sent empty away.

That's when the revolution will come. that's the kingdom that we pray for. And that has no political aspirations at all.

[22 : 59] Its aspiration are that Jesus Christ being given a name which is above every name and that at that name every knee shall bow.

That's the kingdom of which it speaks. Do you know that in Jeremiah 24 there is a story and it's a powerful story. It's a story in which Jeremiah is given a picture a picture of two baskets of figs. And these two baskets of figs are to represent the people who are in Jerusalem and the people in Jerusalem are facing are being surrounded by the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah tells them certainly that God has given the victory into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and that that victory is going to be total and that those people are going to be taken away into a foreign land into captivity.

and the people don't believe Jeremiah and think he's a traitor for saying so. So Jeremiah says I saw two baskets of figs.

You can look at it if you want in Jeremiah 24. Now what it says is two things are going to happen.

[24 : 36] One basket of figs are like the first fruits of the figs and they're all round and perfect and full and well fleshed out and they're really good figs.

And it says about them in verse 6 as he interprets who these figs are. I will set my eye upon them for good.

I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down. I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord and that they shall be my people and I will be their God for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

He's saying you are going to go into captivity. You're going to be taken by Nebuchadnezzar. You're going to be taken to a foreign land, but my promise to you will not fail.

Submit to this defeat. Submit to this captivity. Submit to the recognition of your own powerlessness in the face of this tyrant.

[25 : 54] Submit to all that and nevertheless, verse 6, I will bring them back, build them up, not tear them down.

I will plant them, not uproot them. I will give them a heart. In this acknowledgement of defeat, you will be brought to the place of great blessing.

Then to the other fig, basket of figs which were so rotten you couldn't eat them. represent the people who in their defiance are going to stand against the purposes of God in history and try and write their own history and try and do things in their own strength.

And verse 9 says of them, I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth to be a reproach, a byword, a taunt, a curse.

In all the places where I shall drive them, I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their fathers.

[27 : 16] That, my friends, is why it says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

They're not going to live their lives in the imagination of their own hearts. They're not going to live their lives by the exertion of their own petty tyranny.

They're going to acknowledge their hunger and their poverty and their longing for that kingdom, kingdom, which is the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. And they're going to know that there can be no substitute for that. There is nothing else. that's what it says.

That's, in a sense, the declaration of the revolution which begins with a pregnant girl in a village in Nazareth.

[28 : 24] She announces it to all of history in these words. all of us long to be part of a revolution.

All of us can identify with the causes of revolutionaries because we want to see things change. Things are going to change.

The way they're going to change is described in verses 51 to 53. And the result of that change in 54, he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

God is going to help his servant Israel. God has pledged to us by the centuries, which God has revealed in Jesus Christ, which God has pledged to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

God is going to fulfill. And you and I are to live with the kind of patience that demands that we wait till the kingdoms of this world.

[30 : 15] We wait in hunger and we wait in thirst and in poverty and in recognition of all that belongs to us and all we haven't got.

We wait and wait and wait until God in his mercy brings the kingdoms of this world to be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

That's what you're called to, you and me. A revolution which starts within our own hearts, within our own lives, within our own families, within our community.

A revolution the results of which we know. Let me pray for a God in this revolutionary world where we are invited daily to join this or that or the other.

Help us to recognize the revolution to which you have called us in Christ. We ask in his name.

[31 : 58] Amen. Amen. and if we could continue our time of prayer and intercession as Mary did, let us begin today by coming before God in a time of quiet and remember all that we have to be thankful for, to remember our creation and our preservations, all the blessings which we have, and especially to remember the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to remember God's word which we are able to study and learn from, learn more about God himself.

Thank you.