

# HOW DOES A WEARY WORLD REJOICE?

## We Find Joy in Connection

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### Luke 1:24-45

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most

High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 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 the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. One commentator translates Elizabeth's seclusion: "she hid herself." Why might Elizabeth be hiding?
3. How might Mary's visit be a healing connection for Elizabeth, previously secluded?
4. In her book, *Atlas of the Heart*, researcher Brené Brown defines joy as "an intense feeling of deep spiritual connection, pleasure, and appreciation."<sup>9</sup> She says joy is "characterized by a connection with others, or with God, nature, or the universe." Connection is fundamental to experiences of joy. Consider a time when you experienced deep joy. Who or what did you feel connected to? When have you experienced contagious joy?
5. In Luke 1:45, the Greek word for "happy" or "blessed" is *makarios*, which means "fortunate," and was often used to describe rich or elite people who enjoyed good fortune and carefree lifestyles. Consider the irony of this word being attributed to Mary, a self-described "low-status servant" (Luke 1:48). How might her

blessed joy contrast with that other sense of "happy" or "fortunate."

6. Have you been practicing joy this Advent season through a devotional, following a daily prompt on the South Elkhorn Facebook or Instagram Page, or with an Advent Calendar? If so, reflect on what that's been like, or what you've discovered.

Find resources for practicing Advent:

[southelkhorncc.org/advent](https://southelkhorncc.org/advent)

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