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Advent 4C
Peace, Seattle
December 20, 2015
Luke 1:5-79

SPACE FOR GOD WITHIN

These scenes we're privy to this morning are so personal and the scale is so intimate; and we love Luke for that. Each one can touch us deeply—and has through the generations.

Our longing to see God on a human scale, to get close enough to touch him, is insatiable. And Luke feeds that appetite.

Elizabeth and Mary, for example. Three months they spend together—Elizabeth, in her final trimester, Mary in her first. And we are left to imagine what it was like for them to support one another, to share their secrets, fears, and joys, as each anticipated the child she was to bear.

When Mary found herself face to face with God's Messenger, Gabriel, her response was:
LET IT BE WITH ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.

And as we witness the lives of Mary and Elizabeth touching today, their stories support our own deep yearning to say: **LET IT BE WITH ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.**

In her essay, *Pondering Mary*, Peggy Schultz-Akerson writes:[1]

> Mary models a deep wisdom. She knows the delight of opening wide to an emptiness within us that isn't a void but a spaciousness.
>
> A void [implies] an unfortunate loss or lack. Spaciousness is intentional. It invites the possibility of relationship. It makes room for a holy hunger, a yearning to be filled with the Christ who hungers to come also to us.
>
> Holy hunger is arrived at by a decisive refusal to let the inner chambers of our hearts be filled with anything less than God's word of life."

The invitation which Mary and Elizabeth received, to make room within for God's word to be born, belongs to us all this season. But going to that place so hard.

Reflecting on why this is so, Loretta Ross-Gotta notes:

> Jesus [will say to his companions], "without me you can do nothing." Yet we act, for the most part, as though without us God can do nothing.
>
> We think we have to make Christmas come, which is to say we think we have to bring about the redemption of the universe on our own, when all God needs is a willing womb, a place of safety, nourishment, and love.
>
> "Oh, but nothing will get done," you say. "If I don't do it, Christmas won't happen."
>
> And we crowd out Christ with our fretful fears…
>
> The intensity and strain that many of us bring to Christmas must suggest to some onlookers that, on the whole, Christians do not seem to have gotten the point of it…
>
> What if, instead of doing something, we were to be something special?
>
> Be a womb. Be a dwelling for God.[2]

As we lean into Christmas, what matters most is relationship, the being with, the trusting.

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[1] *The Lutheran*, 12-1997.
[2] From *Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2013) p 96f.

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> "We create holy ground and give birth to Christ in our time not be doing but by believing and by loving the mysterious Infinite One who stirs within," concludes Ross-Gotta.
>
> "This requires trust that something of great and saving importance is growing and kicking its heels in you."[3]

Let us pray.

Holy One, create within us space fit to receive you, and hearts that will link us in a chain of tender caring, encircling all. Amen.

[3] Ibid.