

**Girl Talk, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. A4061224**

**Luke 1:39-41 and Luke 1:42-56**

**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 24 December, 2006**

High on a hill overlooking the village of Ein Kerem, just outside Jerusalem, the Church of the Visitation marks the site where Elizabeth and Mary met and talked about their pregnancies. This was Zechariah's family home, and young Mary had journeyed down from Nazareth to see his wife, Elizabeth. These two women were making their plans for Christmas.

Two women: cousins. Two women, one too old, most would say, to be expecting a baby, and the other too young, some would say, to be expecting a baby. They had something in common to talk about, and the small room was filled with excitement. Girl talk is what they did.

You can picture them, comparing their experiences, talking about back pains, and how they would ready the nurseries. They talked about movements within their wombs: "Ooh, did you see how the baby kicked just then?"

They weren't girls at all, although one was still quite young. They were women, women into whose lives the hope of the world had been entrusted. Two women, one old, one young, both poor and from insignificant families.

According to the scriptures, the women talk went something like this: "Blessed are you among women," said the older to the younger. "When I heard your voice, my baby leaped in my womb." As every mother knows, it is God who inspires the leaping of unborn children. At the moment of first movement, there is in the mother a jumping for joy too – a recognition that life exists – a promise of something new. There is no doubt that the sovereign will of God is taking place.

"My soul magnifies the Lord," said the younger to the older, "and my spirit rejoices in God my savior." The sovereign will of God was unfolding, and they had to make ready.

This woman-talk was about what really matters: the really important things of the world. This was not about quarterly profits, not about bowl games, and not about military training. These women were talking about the cosmic order. They were talking about the priority of God in the lives of human beings. It is God who is the source of life and power, and if you don't have God in your life, you don't have anything.

God is sovereign, the younger one realized. She said that God "scatters the proud and confuses them." "God brings down the powerful from their thrones," and "God lifts up the lowly." This is God's world, and Christmas is a reminder that it is God's and not ours. Perhaps it would be well to remember that, as we frantically look for a parking place at the mall. As you stand in the long checkout line, repeat to yourself, "This is God's world." You can't make things move any faster, and your salvation does not lie in those presents or in that party.

Salvation isn't in the pageant or Christmas dinner. Neither is salvation in our human organizations, our governments, our stocks, or our businesses. Our salvation is in God alone. As the younger woman said, "God is our savior."

The two women were making their plans for Christmas. Perhaps they talked about gifts and showers and meals. One of them was young and vigorous. She had just made a sixty-mile trip, probably on foot, you know. The other was a bit more fragile, and her husband couldn't even talk. But, their children would be born, whether they were ready or not. Christmas will come, whether we're ready for it or not. In the midst of the confusion there will be the birth of a savior.

Just as these were two different kinds of women, there are two different kinds of creches, or

manger scenes. Some are rugged and can be played with like toys, while others are only for looking at, made of fine porcelain. We have a creche under our Christmas tree. It's of the former variety. Our cat Shaley has found this creche to be quite interesting and likes to take the baby Jesus out of the manger and carry him around. I don't have a lot of faith in her mothering skills, but she does like Jesus. Maybe we should call her "Shaley the curious Christ-lover."

Some creches are like that: they can be played with. Children can take the cattle and move them toward the manger to peer in and see the baby. They can move the shepherds from the fields and into the barn. They can make wise men move closer each day as Christmas approaches.

There are other creches that are perfectly molded and hand-painted. They are expensive and quite fragile. They are beautiful to behold, but you can't touch them, because you might break the fine porcelain. They have a sort of holy untouchable quality to them.

God's visitation to us is like both of those kinds of creches. There is something holy and precious about Christmas and God's coming to live with humanity. The unfolding of the sovereign will of God is unspeakably holy. It cannot be touched or even comprehended.

There is also something quite earthy and rugged about God's visitation. God is able to get right down in the dirt with us and be carried around, not in our teeth, but in our hearts. God can be cuddled like a precious baby.

Christmas carries both of those qualities, and just like those two pregnant women, we carry the holiness of God in our bodies and in our lives. The promise of new life and salvation is in our hands and in our words. The only question is, are we willing to give of ourselves the same way those two women were willing to give?

In the giving of ourselves for the sake of others, God comes and lives with humanity!