

First Sunday after Christmas

Lectionary Title 5: **Announcing Jesus' Ministry**

Old Testament: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (NRSV, 1989)

Hannah's Prayer

¹Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. ²There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ³Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. ⁴The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. ⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. ⁸He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. ⁹He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. ¹⁰The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed.'

New Testament: Luke 1:46-53 (NRSV, 1989)

Mary's Song of Praise

⁴⁶And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

General Concept: Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.**

ME/OE **Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.**

Y: **Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.**

A: **Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Both a prayer and a song, the text speaks of the joy of Hannah when she received the favor from the Lord to have a son although she promised that the child named Samuel would be in the service of the temple. Thus, Hannah still prayed with joy and praised God's magnificent and awesome power to work wonders even in the midst of impossibility and even in times that are confronted by the wicked oppositions in life by various hostile forces. She proclaimed God as sovereign and having full control of every situation even if it may be perceived as almost hopeless.

God will make things possible in favor of the good and not of the evil. Hannah also reflects the picture of a woman who has a deep sense of belief in a God who will take the

side and hear the prayers of the oppressed as in her case, being barren which had been answered. In this sense her voice becomes the voice of all women who are in a similar situation, the socially rejected and despised ones because of their barrenness or inability to bear children for their husbands. Thus, this will now serve as a strong evidence that God is not deaf nor insensitive to the aspirations of those who feel ignored and belittled and dishonored on account of their handicapped situation. This song of triumph may be seen as a light at the end of a long, dark tunnel.

This prayer and song is also similar to Mary's song when Gabriel announced the birth of the Savior Jesus at a time when it appears to be a difficult if not an impossible prospect to accomplish. Yet, the song is a positive one where it speaks of the unspoken aspirations of the oppressed and the outcast similar to the song and prayer of Hannah.

The song of Mary, better known as the Magnificat, can be an affirmation of the faith of Mary to a God whom she along with others in the margins believe to be working to bring change to the life of those in the margins and the oppressed. The Magnificat is an acclamation to the God who will bring about a radical change and a 180 degree turn to what is presently experienced by Mary and the others who also feel the burdens of the oppressed, poor and marginalized people of the land. Mary as a simple, countryside resident has expressed in a highly poetic language the thoughts and values of a simple, ordinary person who has nothing in life but an abundance of faith and trust in the Lord the God of her people.

It might be that the experience is completely real to her and she is one with those who experienced so much deprivations and insufficiencies in life, especially in economic sustenance, security and social standing. She sings a song that holds no bar; a frank reflection on the realities, contradictions and inequalities in life and the deep faith on how God will intervene to reverse things in the social and political realms. This could also indicate to us how Jesus can also be identified with the marginalized because Mary as Jesus' mother had taught her the realities of life and its contradictions, the enormous gap between the powerful and the powerless, the rich living in enormous luxury whose dinner tables are always full of bounties taken from the deeply exploited farmers and the poor of the land simply surviving in utter destitution. But she also imparted to him her deep and unshakeable faith in God who will change things and transform it all.

She considered her calling and task to be the mother of Jesus as a blessing and honor for her because she has become the bearer and mother of the Christ, the Savior. It is no surprise that Jesus grew up wholeheartedly sharing the same values, the same faith perspective and depth belief and trust in God, the same view of life and reality and in how God will transform and even reverse such realities of life in favor of the weak, the powerless and victimized ones in the society.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Already before Jesus' birth, his mother had an insight into God's design for the salvation of her people. At this point, she may not have grasped its full scope and consequences but she understood that God's choice of her was an affirmation of who she was and her aspirations in life: the ascendancy of the lowly and poor in God's kingdom over and against the rule of the rich and powerful. It was her son Jesus who would be God's instrument to realize the historical longings and hopes of the poor in the kingdom of God. Mary resolved that she would bring up Jesus in the ways of the messiah as intended by God.

In view of Jesus' pronouncements during his ministry, one may reconstruct his early education with some degree of accuracy. Most likely, Mary introduced the young Jesus to the traditions and history of the Jewish faith – the Law and the Prophets. It was through Mary's early instruction at home that Jesus learned to love learning with the other children at the feet of the rabbis at the synagogue. These teachers were, however, part of the Jewish establishment that collaborated with colonial Rome. Fearful of the Roman authorities in Jerusalem, the instructions that they gave emphasized the legalistic interpretation of the law and intentionally glossed over the implications of the Exodus event and the prophetic lure to the current situation. This might have planted the seeds of distrust and contempt for the rabbinical approach to education and to the institution itself headed by the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus also got additional instructions from his mother and older neighbors in Nazareth of Galilee about the people's history of resistance to various occupying forces, particularly Roman. The story of Galileans crucified for rebellion by order of Pontius Pilate must still be fresh in Jesus' mind and of the people in the area. Most likely, there were rebels going around at night educating the younger residents and recruiting them to the revolutionary movement.

There were two kinds of instruction that Jesus went through. One was at the synagogue under the rabbis; the other took place in the night. Jesus was likely a devout Jew who wished to be faithful to his faith-traditions. At the same time, he might find his instruction at night quite compelling and inspiring. Jesus did not rush to make a career decision but took time, rather late, when he got to be about thirty. Perhaps, he let it percolate in his mind for a while and waited for the right time – the moment of his struggle with the Devil in the wilderness. He resolved to bring the two together: the hope for the national and social liberation of his people coincided with the good news of the kingdom of God. He decided to follow John the Baptist, a preacher of the kingdom and an uncompromising critique of the political rulers.

Mary may have supported Jesus' decision not to be "normal" Jew – take up a trade, settle down, assume leadership in the community. But she had had no inkling, however, that her son would end up on the cross, much less of his resurrection and elevation to judge humankind on the Day of the Lord. It's likely that together with her younger son James she would join the church in Jerusalem following Jesus' resurrection.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to identify Jesus' mother as His first teacher in the Jewish faith;
2. begin to recognize the first teachers in Christian faith; and
3. begin to express appreciation for one's teachers in faith.

II. Concept: Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), picture of Mary teaching Jesus, enlarged pictures of Mary and Jesus doing things together, song chart, memory verse chart

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child and check the attendance
2. Teach the song "Love God" and review the other songs learned in the previous lessons.
3. Opening prayer: "Father, we praise you today. Thank you for being with us. Guide us as we talk about how Mary taught her son Jesus about their faith. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the children to play the game "Charade". Write each of these action words on a piece of paper.

Reading	Washing Dishes	Listening	Sweeping
Praying	Singing	Feeding animals	Dancing
2. Fold them. Put inside a box. Call on a pupil to get a piece of paper and to act out what is written on it. Tell the children to guess what the following children are doing.
3. Talk time. Ask:
 - a. Who teaches you to read?
 - b. Who teaches you to pray?
 - c. Who teaches you to sing?
 - d. Who teaches you to sweep the floor?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "In our story today, find out who teaches Jesus to do these things."
2. Talk about the picture before reading the story.

"Mary Teaches Jesus"

One afternoon while sitting on the living room, Mary asked Jesus, "Did you clean all the dishes?"

"Yes, Mother!" Jesus answered.

"How about our doves? Did you feed them already?" Mary checked.

"Of course, Mother!" Jesus replied while smiling.

"Good. You are really obedient, Jesus," his mother praised him.

Then, Mary invited Jesus, "Come, sit by me. Let's recite the Shema Israel again like you did this morning. Cover your eyes with your right hand."

Together they recited,

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever."

Jesus continued on the long recitation following as his mother led him.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who teaches Jesus to pray? (Mary)
 - b. What did Jesus and his mother recite together? (the Shema Israel)
2. Tell the class to talk about the pictures in the activity sheet that show what Jesus' day was (4 given pictures as shown in the activity sheet).
3. *Sharing*. Have the learners take turns in telling the activities of Jesus for that day using the given pictures.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who was Jesus' first teacher? (His mother, Mary) Who teaches you to pray, sing and know stories about God? (Parents, Sunday school teacher) What else did he or she teach you how to love God? Say: Jesus continued to grow in his faith with the guidance of his Mary. Mary was Jesus' first teacher. We also grow in God's love as our parents teach us about our faith. Our Sunday school teacher and our pastor also help us grow in our faith.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verses.

For N/K: "My soul magnifies the Lord." (Luke 1:46)

For YE: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God." (Luke 1:46-47a)

For N/K

2. *Creative activity*. Tell the class to complete the picture and color it. (Activity sheet)
3. *Sharing*: After coloring, have the learners declare, "Mary is the first teacher of Jesus." Have them share what Mary taught Jesus like, "Mary taught Jesus to pray. Mary taught Jesus to sing praises to God."

For YE

2. *Creative activity*. Let the children look at the different parts shown in the activity sheet. Tell them to cut the parts and paste them together to show mother and child. Ask them to decorate their artwork.
3. Encourage the children to say, "Thank you for helping me grow in God's love."

G. Closing Worship

1. Let the children recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Remind the children that as they give their gifts joyfully they are also
3. Closing songs: "Many Many Years Ago"; and "When Jesus Was a Baby Boy"
4. Closing prayer: Our Lord God, we thank you for letting us know that Jesus was once like us—needing the nurturing hands of his mother, Mary. Thank you for our own teachers in faith - our parents, our Sunday School teacher and our pastor. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. Identify Mary as the first teacher of Jesus in the Jewish faith;
2. recognize and appreciate the first teachers in the Christian faith; and
3. practice sharing the faith to one's siblings, friends, and classmates.

II. Concept: Jesus learned about faith in God through Mary.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they come.
2. Teach the song "Love God" and review the other songs learned in the previous lessons.
3. Opening prayer: "Father, we praise you today. Thank you for being with us. Guide us as we talk about how Mary taught her son Jesus about their faith. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to think of two home chores that they are happy doing and the reason for their choice. Ask them to share this with their classmates.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who taught you to do these chores?
 - b. How often do you these chores?
 - c. How do you feel when doing these chores?
5. Who do you think teaches Jesus to do so? Let us find out in our story.

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let us find in our story who taught the main character in doing his home chores."
2. Present the story in the activity sheet.

Mary and Jesus

One afternoon while sitting on the living room, Mary asked Jesus, "Did you clean all the dishes?"

"Yes, Mother!" Jesus answered.

"How about our doves? Did you feed them already?" Mary checked.

"Of course, Mother!" Jesus replied while smiling.

"Good. You are really obedient, Jesus," his mother praised him.

Then, Mary invited Jesus, "Come, sit by me. Let's recite the Shema Israel again like you did this morning. Cover you eyes with your right hand."

Together they recited,

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever."

Jesus continued on the long recitation following as his mother led him.

"Remember, when we pray we are talking to God. We must avoid giggles for God is listening to us. Do as I say." Mary explained further.

Before Jesus prayed the Shemoneh Esrei, he and Mary stood, took three steps forward and three steps backward. They stood and prayed praises, petitions, and thanks to God.

Jesus was happy doing what his mother showed him. They sang psalms to God. He remembered all the lessons he learned for today.

Soon, his eyes felt heavy and he fell asleep on Mary's lap. And Mary hushed, "Sleep tight, my child. You had a long day."

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the story and ask these questions.

1. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who teaches Jesus to pray? (Mary)
 - b. What did Jesus and his mother recite together? (the Shema Israel)
 - c. What else did Mary teach Jesus about God?
 - d. Aside from praying, what else did Mary teach Jesus? (the prayer Shemoneh Esrei)
 - e. What did Mary make Jesus do before they prayed together? (They stood, took three steps forward and three steps backward.)
 - f. What do you do when you pray? (We close our eyes and put our hands together.)
2. Present the pictures that show the activities of Jesus. Let the children talk about them and compare them with what they do (4 given pictures as shown in the activity sheet).
3. *Sharing.* Have the learners take turns in telling what they think about the activity. (Jesus was like us and he listened and followed his parents.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who taught Jesus about his faith? Who teaches you to pray and love God? What else did he or she teach you how to love God?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "From now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name." (Luke 1:48)
2. Divide the class into dyads. Let them talk about the part of the lesson they like best. Tell them to present their answer before the class by role playing. Ask the class to role play.
3. *Creative activity.* Ask the class to make thank you cards.

For ME: Let the children prepare cards thanking the persons at home that taught them about the Christian faith.

For OE: Let the children prepare cards thanking the persons in school and in the church that taught them about the Christian faith.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: I am like Jesus when he was small. My parents taught me about my faith. I thank my parents for teaching me.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "What Child Is This" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 138)
5. Closing prayer: Thank you dear God, for the persons who taught us our faith. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe the standpoint of Hannah and Mary towards the world in their songs;
2. recognize the significant work of Mary as the first teacher of Jesus in the Jewish faith;
3. recognize and appreciate the teachers of the church in the teaching of Christian faith; and
4. make resolutions on how to be involved in the teaching ministry of the church.

II. Concept: Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening song: first two stanzas of "What Child Is This" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 138)
3. Opening prayer: Dear Father, we honor your holy name. Help us understand the prayers and songs of Hannah and Mary. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to play the game "Find your Shoe". Each person puts one shoe in the middle. In turn each person is then blindfolded, and has to find their shoe, with instructions shouted out by the rest of the group.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - a. How were you able to find for your shoe?
 - b. What was the great challenge in our game? Why?
3. Say: "Listening to the instructions is important for you to know what to do and perhaps arrive at a favorable outcome. Before Jesus did his ministry, he used to be a little boy listening to his mother's instructions. Mary had been his early teacher. Most of our mothers and fathers had been our first teachers. They not only taught us good manners but introduced us to Jesus and the church.

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let us read the songs of these two mothers and find out how they accept to the duty of raising their child. Later let's describe their standpoint about the world."
2. Divide the class into two. Call the groups Group Hannah and Group Mary. Direct their attention to the two activity sheets.

Group Hannah: The first group will read Hannah's song in 2 Samuel 2: 1-8. After reading the verses, let the group find another version of the Bible and copy Hannah's prayer. Then compare the texts. .

Group Mary: The second group will read Mary's song in Luke 1: 46-55. After reading the verses, let the group write Mary's song in their own words.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions:

1. What is Hannah's standpoint towards the world? (Please refer to the exegesis and companion guide.)
2. What is Mary's standpoint towards the world? (Please refer to the exegesis and companion guide.)
3. What commonality do the songs tell us about God? (Please refer to the exegesis and companion guide.)
4. Recognizing God's powerful acts, how do you think Mary teaches Jesus about faith in God?
5. As we live in our times today, how do we learn to have faith in God?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who among our teachers in faith do you admire most? Why?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Discuss these verses.

1. Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. (Samuel 2:1)
2. And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. (Luke 1:46-48)
3. Tell the class to write a resolution on how to encourage everybody to be involved in the teaching ministry of the church.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: last two stanzas of "What Child Is This" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 138)
3. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for letting us realize how Hannah and Mary considered your sovereignty over the world. In the name of the Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell the highlights of the faith of Hannah and Mary as revealed in their songs;
2. compare the standpoints of Hannah and Mary towards the world;
3. describe what Jesus imbibed from Mary's teachings
4. list some of the teachings in the Christian faith that relate to the development of character and worldview as deduced from the songs of Hannah and Mary; and
5. align one's faith with the Christian teachings.

II. Concept: Jesus imbibed his mother's character and standpoint towards the world.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening song: first two stanzas of "What Child Is This" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 138)
3. Opening prayer: Dear Father, we honor your holy name. Help us understand the prayers and songs of Hannah and Mary. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to identify who among the biblical characters sing songs. Tell them to match their songs about by matching A and B. (You may convert this activity into a game by asking the class to find their match.)

Column A	Column B
1. Moses (b)	a. Sang to announce the birth of the Messiah
2. David (d)	b. Sang to praise God for saving the Israelites from the enemies.
3. Miriam (c)	c. Led the people to sing and dance as they have witnessed God's liberation among God's people.
4. Angels (a)	d. Sang to glorify and magnify is mightiness of God

2. Ask: "Why do you think some characters in the bible use songs to express their message?"
3. Say: "Let us find out about the songs sang by two mothers. Find out each song's message about their faith."

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class into two. Call the groups Group Hannah and Group Mary. Direct their attention to the two activity sheets.
2. Tell Group Hannah to read Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-8. After reading the verses, let the group answer the questions.
 - a. How can you describe Hannah's faith as revealed in her song? (Hannah praises God for everything.) How does she praise God?

- b. Which verses tell Hannah's standpoint about the world? (vv 2-10: God is holy, all-knowing, sovereign, compassionate, and just.)
3. Tell Group Mary to read Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. After reading the verses, let the group answer these questions.
 - a. How did Mary reveal her faith as she sang her song? (vv. 46-48: God noticed her.) How does she praise God?
 - b. What could be Mary's standpoint about the world (vv. 49-55: God is holy, merciful, powerful, sovereign, and faithful.)?
 - c. What task of Jesus is deduced from Mary's song?
4. Allow 3 minutes for each group to share what they have discussed.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss briefly the background context of each song for deepening of the lesson. Refer to the exegesis and companion guide.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. Compare the standpoints of Hannah and Mary towards the world. Do they differ or just the same? How do they differ? How are they the same?
 - b. In the early stage of Jesus' ministry he describes his task. Read Luke 4:18-19.
 - c. Describe what Jesus imbibed from Mary's teachings.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How did Jesus imbibe his mother's standpoint towards the world? What are some of the teachings of the Christian faith that relate to the development of character as reflected in the songs of Hannah and Mary?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask the class to express agreement on this fact: Mary did not only give birth to the Messiah but also raised and taught Jesus about the ministry ahead of him.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: last two stanzas of the song "What Child Is This" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 138)
3. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for letting us realize how Mary taught Jesus to prepare him for his ministry of salvation for all people. Guide us to understand how Jesus focused on his ministry and help us understand his purpose for us. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.