

Revelation comes through an act of kinship and kindness. Mary visits Elizabeth and both are enlightened – and enlighten us – in ways that perhaps surprised even themselves: the law of synergy where two or more meet and something new is brought into being, which is not so much more, or less, but something different - unexpected. Mary meets Elizabeth and, in this small barren world, a sign of hope emerges for all of us and Israel's story becomes our own. All these readings today, from Zephaniah, Isaiah and Luke, highlight the dynamic which Israel presents to the world: that of hope in the midst of turmoil: that of a larger story at work which will make the difficulties of our own but steps towards a victorious ending. Zephaniah and Isaiah write at a time God's chosen people seem abandoned by God, subject to imminent disaster and exile, yet they find hope – this is not your ultimate end:

*He will exult with joy over you
he will renew you by his love.*
(Zeph.3:17)

*With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.*
(Is.12:3)

And Mary finds this true, too, in her own encounter with Elizabeth; she comes to comfort Elizabeth but it is Elizabeth who comforts her:

*Look, the moment your greeting
reached my ears , the child in my
womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is
she who believed that the promise
made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.*

And Mary proclaims a magnificent hymn which brings together a litany of references to Israel's past history now fulfilled in her own: from Samuel, Habakkuk, Job, the psalms and Genesis This is Luke's celebration of Israel's story of hope now given to the world. This is a kindness and a kinship that has no end.

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