

Sermon :: 12-Oct-2025
Proper 23, Year C

“ the Lord ”

We certainly weren't poor, but money was sometimes a little *tight* in our family during my childhood. Although we'd *eventually* come to make Maine our annual summer vacation destination ... when I was in elementary school, 'staycations'—of course, we didn't *have* that word, back *then*—were the norm. The big excitement,¹ for my sister and me, was that Dad would be home with us ... *all day ... for two whole weeks!*

We also almost *never* went to the movie theatre. So, a confluence of these two special events—Dad's being home during the week *and* our going to see a movie—marked it *very* special day in my young life ... that summer of 1977 ... when we went to see the original theatrical release of George Lucas' STAR WARS. All four of us were pretty bowled over by what we saw on the screen that afternoon ... and we were *still* talking about it over dinner that *night*.² Luke Skywalker ... Princess Leia ... C3PO ... R2D2 ... Han Solo ... Chewbacca ... and, of course, that über-villain *Lord Vega*. [*pause*] What's that you say? You don't *remember* any “Lord Vega” in STAR WARS? Well, that's because there *was* none. In something of a *family mondegreen*³ ... all *four* of us had somehow misheard⁴ Darth Vader's name as “Lord Vega.” And for *me*, at least—it *stuck*, for *years*⁵: It wasn't till sixth or seventh grade, I think, that one of my friends finally set me straight: “His name, you dope, is *Darth Vader*, not *Lord Vega*!”

Now—approaching fifty years on—the name “Darth Vader” has become iconic: He couldn't *be* anything *else*. But LORD *works* for him, *too*, doesn't it? We use LORD to refer to ¶someone who is *above* us ... *beyond* us ... more *powerful* than we; ¶someone who *oversees*—maybe even *rules over*—us; ¶the one whom, for good or for ill, we must *obey* and, perhaps, even *worship*. And as the villain-in-chief of the first few STAR WARS movies ... the unrelentingly driven, mercilessly powerful foe of Luke, Leia and Han ... Darth Vader would certainly qualify as a LORD ... if only around the Worthington family dinner table.

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In his gospel account of Jesus' earthly ministry, St Luke uses the Greek word LORD,⁶ early and often, to refer to both God the Father *and* to Jesus. And perhaps nowhere more memorably than immediately after Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary's cousin, remarks how blessed Mary is to be “the mother of my LORD.” And in response, Mary exclaims, “Tell out, my soul, the greatness of *the LORD*.” We've taken Mary's words as the theme of our stewardship campaign this year ... and over the past

¹ For us kids, at least. I'm not sure how *Dad* felt about it!

² So big an event was this in my life that I even remember what we were eating: my mother's shrimp scampi!

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondegreen>.

⁴ Or perhaps more likely, *one* of us misheard it, and the other three were unsure and just went along (?).

⁵ Recall, this was the pre-on-demand ... indeed, even the pre-VCR ... era. You saw a movie once, on the big screen, and then couldn't see it again until it was rereleased or aired on television.

⁶ *I.e.*, κύριος. In the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, κύριος is the word used to translate the Hebrew YHWH: the four-letter word for “God” (pronounced YAH-weh) that, out of reverence, Jews did (do) not dare to speak aloud; instead, they said (say) “Adonai,” meaning LORD. Following this convention, in English translations of Scripture, YHWH is rendered thus: LORD. (Exceptions are made when the text expressly speaks—utters—the Name of God; for example, in Psalms 68 and 83.)

few weeks, ¶we've considered how our pledging to support All Souls' is a way to *tell out* **all** the amazing **work** and **worship** of Jesus that takes place here; ¶we've explored letting our *souls*—our direct spiritual connection to Christ—be the loudest voice guiding our discernment of how much we should pledge; and ¶we've pondered taking the *greatness* of God's generosity—of God's coming to live *among* us and die *for* us—as the paramount—the *ultimate*—model for Christian self-giving.

And so, today, we come, at last, to *LORD*. On Mary's lips, *LORD* is, of course, a term of *reverence* ... of *deference* ... of *obedience*, *fealty* and *awe*.⁷ And in *these* senses ... Mary's usage of *LORD* doesn't differ much from the title my family and I *mistakenly* gave to Luke and Leia's evil nemesis in *STAR WARS*.

But in one very ... perhaps even *hugely* ... important sense, *Mary's LORD* is *completely* different: She *also* calls God "my *LORD*" because she recognizes ... that **in** God's being *above*, *over* and *beyond* **us** ... *also dwells our hope*. As Mary proclaims in her canticle⁸ that we've been [**saying / singing**] every week as our Song of Praise ... ¶because *God is LORD* ... *mercy* will be shown from *generation* to *generation*; ¶because *God is LORD* ... the grasping, overreaching powerful **will** be cast *down* ... the poor, dispirited lowly **will** be raised *up* ... and the hungry—of both stomach and spirit—**will** be *filled* with *good things*; and ¶because *God is LORD* ... every promise of faithfulness, redemption and communion-with-God that God has *ever* made us ... right from the very, very beginning ... **will be fulfilled**. However *difficult* it may be for us to *perceive* God's mercy being shown ... however *blinkered* to us are God's efforts to *right* the wrongs of this world ... however *long* it may take for God to *keep* God's promises—"a thousand ages in God's sight are like an evening gone"⁹: In my *LORD* ... in **our** *LORD* ... *lies our hope* — *abundant hope* ... *all-sufficient hope* ... *final, complete* and *fulfilling* hope ... that all **will** be as God *intends* it ... for *us* and for the *whole* of *Creation*:

- The hope **of** the *LORD* the prophet Jeremiah writes of, in his letter to his now-exiled compatriots, living in captivity in Babylon: Do not give up ... do not despair ... but go on *living, fully* and *fruitfully* ... for the *LORD* gives you "a future with *hope*."
- The hope **in** the *LORD* that the psalmist sings: Whatever the snares that beset us ... however many the burdens that crush us ... whoever the enemies who "ride over our heads" ... "*God holds our souls in life*, and will [never] allow our feet to slip" [] away from the *hope* that is the *LORD's* steadfast-and-all-surpassing grace.
- The hope **of** our *LORD* Jesus that draws the lone healed leper¹⁰ back to His side ... to kneel before Him, in gratitude and praise: grasping ... through faith ... that he has not just been cured of his *bodily* affliction ... but has also been *welcomed*, by the *LORD*, into the *sure hope* of eternal forgiveness and salvation, just as *we* have.

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⁷ Indeed, see the previous note on YHWH/*LORD*. Mary is, of course, an observant Jew (see, e.g., in Luke 2, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and the family's regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem).

⁸ A canticle is any song in the Bible *outside* the Book of Psalms. There are numerous examples in both the Old and New Testaments. For a sampling, see the table of suggested canticles for the Daily Office, *BCP*, pp 144-45.

⁹ Hymn 680 in *The Hymnal 1982* (text by Isaac Watts).

¹⁰ The 'leprosy' of the Bible was not the Hansen's disease that we refer to by this term today. It was some form of disfiguring—and thus, under the Law, ritually unclean—skin disease that rendered one an outcast from society (for reasons probably at least as much spiritual or theological as medical).

The *hope* of the **LORD**. The conviction that in the suckling LORD, born to Mary ... in the dying LORD, upon the Cross ... in the risen LORD, that Easter **morn** ... God is not only **always** *with* us and *for* us ... but also always in *love* with us, no matter *what*. The sureness and certainty that, in Christ our LORD, **all** will be well ... and right ... and good ... and gracious. The song of **Mary's** *soul* that stirs *our own* souls to sing of the great generosity ... the overflowing magnanimity ... the limitless compassion and grace ... of the LORD.

And so, I ask you: ¶How *loudly* will *you* sing Mary's song, in *thanksgiving*? ¶How *expressively* will *you* sing Mary's song, in *commitment*? ¶How *passionately* will *you* sing Mary's song, in *generosity*? ¶And how *assuredly* will *you* sing Mary's song, in *hope*? For pledges we make, year-after-year, are a testament—a tangible *sign of* and a meaningful *response to*—the hope *we* have in the LORD: the very *same* hope that *God* has so *faithfully* and *exuberantly* given *us* ... in our LORD [|] Jesus Christ. So yes ... let us **all** tell *out*, our souls, the greatness of the LORD!

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