

“Mary Visits Elizabeth/The Magnificat”  
(Luke 1:39-56)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

We saw last time,  
The angel speaking to Zacharias in the Temple –  
Both in answer to his prayers for a child,  
And in answer to the Lord’s promise  
To send the forerunner of the Messiah:  
  
The 400 years of God’s silence  
Was now being broken –  
He was preparing to send His Messiah.  
  
At first Zacharias was afraid –  
And so the angel comforted him –  
  
But then he doubted –  
Could God really give to him and Elizabeth  
A child this late in life? –  
  
And so the Lord, in His grace,  
Decided to teach Zacharias a lesson –  
He wouldn’t be able to speak to anyone –  
About this or any other matter –  
Until the prophecy was fulfilled –  
Until the child was born  
And he was named.  
  
He also didn’t withdraw His blessing –

Elizabeth conceived as He promised –

Again, because He is gracious.

The Lord knows our weaknesses –

He knows we often struggle to believe:

Even though there's never a reason to doubt Him,

We so often do because we have so little faith;

It's good to know the Lord still loves us

And helps us keep moving forward.

We also saw the Lord send Gabriel to Mary

To tell her the good news

That she had been chosen

For a very special purpose:

To give birth to the Messiah.

She didn't know how it could happen –

She hadn't yet come together with Joseph –

She knew something of what this would mean –

What would Joseph think?

What would others think? –

But she believed doing the Lord's will

Was more important –

And so she submitted;

The Spirit overshadowed her –

As He did the earth at its creation –

And His Son descended into the world –

The incarnation of our Lord took place.

B. Preview.

This morning, we see what happened next:

Mary's visit to Elizabeth;

John's response to Jesus' presence;

Elizabeth's prophecy regarding Jesus;

And Mary's exaltation of the Lord.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see Mary hurry to see Elizabeth (v. 39).

She didn't visit her

Because she doubted what the angel said

And wanted to see for herself –

Mary believed –

She went because she wanted to rejoice with Elizabeth,

Tell her what the Lord had also done for her,

And so what He was about to do for them both.

When the Lord blesses us or others with His mercy,

We should want to rejoice with them,

Especially when these things have to do

With His plan of salvation –

Mary may not have known

That Elizabeth was carrying

The one who would go before her Son –

She may have looked at her blessing  
As simply having a child in her old age –  
But she did know that she was carrying  
The One who would save them both,  
And wanted to share that with her.

B. Second, we see Elizabeth and John

Were both filled with the Spirit.

As soon as Mary greeted Elizabeth,  
The baby leaped in her womb;  
And Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit (v. 41).

John reacted as he did,

Because he was also filled with Spirit –

Remember what Gabriel said to Zacharias:

“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor,  
and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb” (v. 15) –

This means John was already born again –

Someone can be empowered by the Spirit

Without being born again/a true believer –

Such as King Saul or Judas –

But you can't be filled with the Spirit,

Unless you have first been born by the Spirit.

That's why John responded the way he did

When Mary came near with Jesus –

The Spirit is the One who makes us love

The things of the Lord –

That's why we receive

What He says in the Bible;

Why we trust the One

He sent into the world to save us;

Why we follow and serve Him,

Even though it's not popular to do so:

We do it because we love Him.

When we're filled with the Spirit,

We love Him even more –

John was so full of the Spirit,

That when he sensed Jesus near

He leaped for joy (v. 44).

That's why our Lord

Commands us to be filled with the Spirit:

So that we'll love and serve Him more –

This reaction on John's part

Is the exception, rather than the rule:

We don't all come into the world

Spiritually alive and filled with the Spirit:

We don't even come into it innocent –

We come guilty,

Spiritually dead,

Without any love for God.

That's why Jesus told Nicodemus:

You must be born again!

C. Third, we see Elizabeth's prophecy.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,

And John had leaped in her womb,

She was filled with the Spirit,

And began to proclaim in a very loud voice,

“Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?” (vv. 42-43).

She said something

She had no way of knowing

Apart from the Spirit's revealing it to her:

That Mary was blessed among all women:

That she had been singled out by God

To bear and care for His Son!

And that the baby she was carrying

Was the eternally blessed Son of God:

The Lord's Messiah.

What Elizabeth says here

Forms the basis of the Hail Mary prayer

Which is such an important part

Of Roman Catholic piety/rosary.

As Protestants, we agree that Mary is blessed –

To be singled out for this was quite a privilege –

She's also blessed

Because she believed the Lord would do

As He said through the angel (v. 45) –

And we agree that the fruit of her womb is blessed –

Jesus is the eternally blessed One

Who has come into the world in our nature –

But we don't believe

That we should pray to her

Or look to her as a mediator

To help us to draw near to Jesus –

Paul, "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time" (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Elizabeth also calls Mary, "The mother of my Lord" (v. 43).

Sometimes you'll hear her referred to

As "the mother of God," or *Theotokos*.

I once heard a Jesuit priest claim

That this title means

That Jesus derived His deity

At least partly from Mary –

Which is blasphemy.

Historically,

This title/phrase was only meant to state

That the One she was carrying

Really is *God* in our nature.

D. Finally, we see Mary,

Filled with the Spirit,

Exalt the Lord:

This section has been called, “The Magnificat.”

It’s also known as:

The Song/Canticle of Mary,

And in the Byzantine or Greek tradition as

The Ode of the Theotokos (God-Bearer).

Some see in this an echo of the song

Hannah sang to the Lord

When He answered her prayer for a child.

Here we see three things:

1. First, Mary praising the Lord

For sending *her Redeemer* into the world:

Notice, she calls God, “My Savior.”

She, like all of us, was guilty

And needed to be redeemed from her sins:

Roman Catholicism believes

Mary was immaculately conceived –

That the merits of Jesus were applied to her

At the moment of conception,

So that she never became guilty

Or had original sin –

We don't find this anywhere in the Bible:

If she had never become guilty,

She would not have needed a Savior.

Some go as far as to say

That she never sinned after she was born –

Again, this is contrary to what she says here:

God is her Savior – from sin.

## 2. Second, we see her praising the Lord

For choosing her to bring this Blessed One into the world,

Purely by His mercy and grace (v. 50) –

She who was nothing more

Than a lowly and humble bonds slave (v. 48).

God doesn't use the proud (v. 51),

Nor the mighty and noble,

But the humble (v. 52).

He gives to the poor,

And sends the rich away empty-handed (v. 53).

Paul, “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

We don’t have to be great

To be useful to the Lord:

We only need to be humble.

### 3. Finally, she praises the Lord

For His faithfulness toward Abraham and his children

In sending His Son to save.

“He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever” (Luke 1:54-55).

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant,

“In your *seed* all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

This is the One God promised Israel,

And not Israel alone,

But to the world –

Everyone who puts his trust in Jesus will be saved.

If we would make it to heaven,

This is the only One who can get us there.

That’s also what the Table reminds us this morning.