



12/17/25

I love the Christmas story. In all honesty, it took years for me to realize the beauty of this celebration. I had a very difficult home life growing up, and several particularly difficult Christmases. For years, it was hard for me to not shut down during this time. I just went through the motions, hoping someday I'd be able to truly worship Jesus and celebrate His birth. I can now see how year after year God has been patiently replacing my ashes with His beauty. I can now look to this season with excitement for what new treasure He's going to teach me... and I look forward to all the birthday celebrations I will get to experience with Jesus forever in heaven. As the Lord took away the reproach of Elizabeth, through Jesus He has taken away my reproach as well. My sweet friend, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, I celebrate that He has already taken away your reproach, too.

*Merry Blessings,
Jonna*

Luke 1:39-45

So far in the story, God has sent the angel Gabriel to Zechariah to tell him that he and Elizabeth are going to have a baby who will prepare the way for the Lord. Gabriel told Zechariah that this baby would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from the womb. About 6 months later, Gabriel told a virgin named Mary that she had found favor with God and would have the privilege of being the mother of the Savior of the world... a privilege Mary gladly accepted. Gabriel told her about her relative, Elizabeth, who was also with child.

The lessons I've learned and hopefully taken to heart so far are ~

- *God has the power to carry out any plan of His, even giving detail about His plan for thousands of years before He brings it to fulfillment.*
- *Faith in God means trusting what I can't see because I trust Him.*

- *Lack of faith in God does not mean that He will remove His promises. He may discipline me, but He will not abandon me.*
- *It is better to respond, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me according to Your word," rather than "Show me yet another sign, and then I'll believe."*

Now I come to Luke 1:39-45. Lord, please teach me what You want me to understand so that I can "deny myself, take up my cross, and follow You" better.

The angel Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth, and Mary "arose and went with haste" to see her. The distance from Mary's home in Nazareth to Elizabeth's home in the hill country of Judah is about 80-100 miles. Mary was not rich. I'm guessing she walked really fast or got a ride with someone. The journey to Elizabeth's house would have taken her several days... going around mountains and having to be very cautious of hostile attackers.

At this point it would have been very early in her pregnancy. Why be in such a hurry to see Elizabeth? Since I know she responded in faith and surrender to Gabriel, I don't think it was to be reassured... maybe a little. But also, she knew how devastating it was that Elizabeth had been barren. Maybe she wanted to celebrate with her. And even when you know that God is doing something amazing, you don't want to miss out on seeing His miracle! Maybe Mary had FOMO, fear of missing out, like I do. Whatever her reasons... I'm sure there were several... Mary wanted to get there in haste... quickly... without hesitation.

As soon as she got to Judah, Mary entered the house of Zechariah and said hi to Elizabeth. The moment Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, John leaped in her womb. (Elizabeth was about 6 months pregnant by now.) In that moment, the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth!

Until Jesus came, died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, the filling of the Holy Spirit was not typical. That's why it was such a big deal that Gabriel said John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. O Lord, please help me not to take for granted the incredible gift You've given me in sealing me with the Holy Spirit who dwells in me like He did in John... and like He did in Elizabeth in that moment.

For Elizabeth, this moment with the Holy Spirit was a temporary blessing. For me, a believer in Christ, it's every moment of my life. My job is to celebrate His presence... let Him lead me... let Him transform me to be like Jesus. Refuse to quench His involvement in my life by choosing to

obey Him rather than my selfish flesh. Refuse to grieve Him by avoiding what He wants to teach me. It is through the Holy Spirit that the love of God is continually poured into my heart (Romans 5:5). When I grieve Him and quench Him, I cut off the flow of His love into my heart producing the same devastating effects that a baby experiences when the umbilical cord is prevented from carrying the mother's nutrition to the baby. O Lord, let me be filled to the fullness of God as I put my trust in You!

Back to Elizabeth. Filled with the Holy Spirit, she cried out with a loud voice! The Greek word for loud is "Megas". She cried out like a megaphone... "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" How did she know??? Mary probably wasn't showing yet! It was the Holy Spirit revealing this awesome miracle to her! Mary is not to be worshiped. She is not the Savior. But she is to be highly respected and appreciated. She willingly made the choice to say to Gabriel, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me according to your word." That is to be celebrated.

Mary was highly blessed. She got the privilege of holding Jesus close to her heart, of being His nourishment, of comforting Him, of cleaning His wounds when He fell as a child. She would be the one whose heart was ripped out of her as she watched her baby die on a cross, unable to clean His wounds or stop His pain. There is nothing like the loss of a child. Mary chose to obey God, disregarding the cost. She chose to live... Whatever God wants, it's worth it.

Elizabeth didn't stop with those words. She said, "And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" How did she know that Mary was not only pregnant, but also the mother of her Lord, her Master, her supreme authority? How did Elizabeth know that this baby was her supreme authority? "For behold... check it out, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."

Moms feel their babies move all the time. What was different about this movement? At 6 months, the baby is about the size of a cantaloupe. At 6 months the mother can feel the baby kick, roll, hiccup, and wriggle around. So the leaping for joy must have been something out of the ordinary. Maybe that's part of the reason Elizabeth cried out like a megaphone. It startled her. But through the Holy Spirit's filling, it was clear that this was no ordinary movement.

I love what Elizabeth said next, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Again... how did Elizabeth know that Mary believed? All Mary had at this point was, "Hi." Again... Elizabeth knew through the Holy

Spirit. Let me never minimize the magnitude of His power and presence.

Mary was blessed among women, not because of her greatness, but because of the greatness of Who she was carrying... the Savior of the world. She was blessed because of the fruit of her womb... Yeshua is salvation. And she was blessed because of her faith.

Elizabeth understood the beauty of the blessing that comes with faith. Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, was blessed because he got to be the father of the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. But he missed the blessing that comes because of faith. O Lord, I don't want to miss that blessing!!!

Sometimes I let my feelings have more of a voice than Your word. Please help my faith to conquer my feelings. I read a quote from Elizabeth Elliot, "Faith does not eliminate questions, but faith knows where to take them." Just like when Mary took her question to Gabriel who spoke the words of God (Elizabeth didn't bless Mary for believing Gabriel, but for believing the Lord who sent Gabriel). In faith, Mary asked Gabriel, "How can this be?" Lord, please help me to take my questions to You and Your word. By faith, please help me to have more confidence in Your words than in my feelings or in the words of others. Let me never believe the words of man or my feelings over the word of God.

Father, I praise You for the Holy Spirit who fills me with a joy that is not dependent on my circumstances. I praise You for the blessing of salvation. I pray that my faith will grow in sincerity and depth so that I will be able to receive the blessing that comes through faith. Blessed are You, Lord, for the generosity of Your wonderful love.