

Luke 1:39–55, “Fulfillment of Promise Draws Near”

12/12/21 4th Sunday in Advent

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Luke 1:39–55 (NKJV)

³⁹ Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

⁴⁶ And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy *is* His name.

⁵⁰ And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him From generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones, And exalted *the* lowly.

⁵³ He has filled *the* hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of *His* mercy,

⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

There is something really special about expecting a baby at the same time that one of your friends or relatives is expecting a baby. You share excitement, you share the buzz of preparing baby rooms, you share the hope that one day the littles will grow up and be friends.

In today’s text, two cousins who are pregnant at the same time are reunited and what happens between them and between their babies will be celebrated forever. They are SO excited! But the thing that excites them way more than any joy of newfound motherhood is who Mary’s child is and what He will do.

Mary is pregnant with Jesus and her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist. Who are these kids and what will they do? John is a plain old human and his work is to get people ready for Jesus. Jesus is human too because He is conceived in Mary’s womb and will be born by her. But Jesus is also God because He was conceived in Mary’s womb not by Joseph but by the power of the Holy Spirit while Mary was still a virgin.

Jesus is man, born of the virgin Mary, and He is God the Son, eternally begotten of the Father. His work will be to save His people from their sins. John's work of preparing the way for Jesus would be done by calling people to repent, be baptized, believe the Gospel, and bear fruit in keeping with repentance as the kingdom of God was drawing near with the arrival of the savior.

In John 1:29 when John and Jesus were about 30 years old, the baptizer saw Jesus and called Him "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Just like the blood of a lamb was shed as a sacrifice for sin under the old covenant, the blood of Jesus would be shed for your sins and mine as He established a new covenant of grace.

The old covenant, sometimes we call it the Old Testament, was full of promises about the coming Christ. The high schoolers did an amazing job creating an original Christmas Program for the Sunday School that was performed last Sunday. The program started with the very first promise of the savior way back in Genesis 3:15.

Adam and Eve had just ruined the world by rebelling against God's word, trading the truth for a lie, trading eternal life in paradise for death. Since then everyone's been sinning, and everyone's been dying. When will it stop? In Genesis 3:15 God cursed Satan, that ancient serpent, with a promise that one day the seed of the woman, someone who would be born as a descendent of Eve, would defeat Satan.

What Elizabeth and Mary are so overjoyed about isn't so much that they're going to be moms, but that Mary's son is the promised seed of Eve that the world has been waiting for ever since the fall into sin. He is the promised seed of Abraham in whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believed. He is the promised Son of David, the seed of King David who would reign with an everlasting reign. Finally, the fulfillment of the promise was drawing near.

Watch what happens when Mary enters Elizabeth's house. At this point Elizabeth is somewhere around six months pregnant (Luke 1:26) and Mary has only been pregnant for a few days, so she's not even showing a baby bump yet. But the baby is there in her womb. The baby is the Lord God who has become flesh, taking humanity into the nature of God the Son.

Immediately when Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, John leaps in Elizabeth's womb. So who was the first person to rejoice over the Christ child? His cousin John the Baptist while they were both still in their mothers' wombs! The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth and she greets Mary with words given to her by God. Luke 1:42-45 says, "[Elizabeth] spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.'"

John jumping in Elizabeth's womb wasn't your typical in-utero somersault. The Holy Spirit led Elizabeth to report that jump as a joyful welcome of the promised savior. And that's all Elizabeth says about her own baby, John. Everything else she says is a blessing on Mary and on Jesus. She blesses Mary for believing God's promises. She blesses the fruit of Mary's womb, the baby growing in Mary, because He is the Lord Almighty in the flesh.

Will you join Elizabeth in this? Will you call Mary blessed, and will you bless the fruit of her womb? To call Mary blessed is to honor her for the faith with which she believed God's promises. The Bible doesn't instruct us to ask the saints in heaven to pray for us, so we don't ask Mary or any other departed believer to pray for us. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," so we always pray directly to God in the name of Jesus who is our mediator.

But the Bible does invite us to call Mary blessed. She is a blessed example of faith in God's promises. She is a blessed example of doing what God wanted her to do and letting God take care of the consequences. She is a blessed example of offering her life to the work of the Lord.

So far in the text we have seen what is called the Visitation: Mary and Jesus in her womb visiting Elizabeth and John in her womb. Elizabeth has been the primary speaker, praising Mary's faith and praising Mary's Son who is her Lord. Now in Luke 1:46 Mary begins to speak and this part is called the Magnificat because Mary's soul is magnifying the Lord—she is seeing up close the greatness of God. Will you join Mary in this?

First, rejoice in God your savior. Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." This is how God wants to be known above everything else that He should be known for: being the savior. Is God sovereign? Is He all-knowing? Is He everywhere present? Yes, but the thing God wants to be known as above all is that He is the saving God.

He made it clear when He delivered the Israelites from Egypt that Yahweh, the Lord, saves. He made it clear when He took on flesh, entering the womb of the virgin Mary, and being born and being named Jesus which means "Yahweh [the Lord] saves." But He doesn't just save. He saves you.

Mary said, "my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior." Yes, Jesus died on the cross to pay for sins, but do you join Mary in believing that God's promises are also for you? Don't leave today just thinking that Jesus is the savior. Leave with a heart of faith that says, "My souls magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God MY savior."

First, Mary magnifies the Lord,¹ so let's rejoice with her in God our savior. Second, she humbly receives God's mercy. In Luke 1:48 she says, "He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant..." In verse 49 she says, "For He who is mighty has done great things for me..." And in verse 50 she says, "And His mercy is on those who fear Him." All of this adds up to God being merciful to the humble.

Mary was poor. Later when she and Joseph made a sacrifice it was the smaller sacrifice specifically allowed for the poor to do since they couldn't afford the larger sacrifice. There was nothing about her life that anyone from her hometown would find outstanding and lead them to

¹ I have always imagined Mary looking up to heaven as she says the magnificat, but she could have very well been looking at her tummy. Since it's the Lord who took on flesh and was dwelling in her womb, it is appropriate to imagine Mary looking at her tummy where the baby Jesus was growing in her womb and addressing the Magnificat to Him!

think, “wow, Mary is so blessed.” But the blessings of God are not found in worldly possessions, but in possessing Jesus through faith.

Mary not only possessed Jesus by having faith in the promises of a savior, she also possessed Him in her womb. She said in verse 48, “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” Blessed indeed. Blessed with faith and blessed with carrying the savior.

Mary was not sinless. She fully depended on God’s mercy as these verses show. We also cannot say we are without sin. We also must fully depend on God’s mercy, humbling ourselves before Him and imploring His forgiveness on account of Jesus Christ our Lord. And indeed He has mercy on those who fear Him. As you bow before the Lord in lowly humility, hallowing His name, confessing your sin, He lifts you up and does great things for you like forgiving your sins, giving you eternal life, uniting you with the Body of Christ in the congregation!

Third, Mary acknowledges that it’s not the proud and the rich that win in the end. She says in Luke 1:51 that the Lord scatters the proud. In verse 52 she says He puts down the mighty from their thrones and instead exalts the lowly. In verse 53 she says the rich are sent away empty while the Lord fills the hungry with good things. All of this should come as a warning to you who have more than you need. The Lord may bless you with an abundance, but do not lose contentment in the Lord and seek after more and more of what the world has.

And fourth, Mary believes the promises in God’s Word about the savior. She says in verse 54, “He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy.” The Lord always remembers His promises. When you humbly confess your sins to God, what He does is He remembers His mercy and forgives you for Christ’s sake.

Mary says in verse 55, “As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.” And that brings us back to the Christmas Program. The promised seed of Eve was the promised seed of Abraham and the promised seed of David. Finally the fulfillment of the promise had come with the seed of Mary finally being the savior.

Mary believed. As Elizabeth said, “Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Join Elizabeth in calling Mary blessed for her faith and for faithfully bearing the Christ child. Join Mary also: rejoice in God your savior; humbly receive God’s mercy; acknowledge that pride and possessions won’t cut it; and believe the promises in God’s Word about your savior.

He loves you. He humbled Himself, allowing Mary to carry Him, allowing a manger to cradle Him, allowing John to baptize Him, allowing Pontius Pilate to crucify Him, allowing even His body to die on that cross and be buried, all for you. He rose again to give you life in His name, and He is returning again soon to make all things new. In Mary’s womb the fulfillment of promise was drawing near. As we look for Christ’s glorious return we pray, “Come quickly, Lord Jesus,” trusting that the fulfillment of that promise is also drawing near according to God’s perfect timing.

As you trust in His promises, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.