

Jesus In

Christmas

Luke 1:39-55

*The Virgin's Song
and a Grateful Heart*

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FOCAL Read Responsively **Luke 1:39-55^{KJV}** And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; {40} And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. {41} And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: {42} And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed [art] thou among women, and blessed [is] the fruit of thy womb. {43} **And whence [is] this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? {44} For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. {45} And blessed [is] she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. {46} And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, {47} And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. {48} For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. {49} For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name. {50} And his mercy [is] on them that fear him from generation to generation. {51} He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. {52} He hath put down the mighty from [their] seats, and exalted them of low degree. {53} He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. {54} He hath [helped] his servant Israel, in remembrance of [his] mercy; {55} As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.**

I remember, several many Christmas seasons ago, when I was a young boy. I remember we didn't have much in those days, but I do remember the Christmas that daddy bought me my bicycle. I remember how shiny and new it was, how pretty, and how excited I was to have that thing. Oh, how my brother and I rode our bicycles. I don't know if I thanked daddy for that bike, or if I thanked "Santa Claus", but I know I appreciated it.

As we grew up the bicycles went away for most of us. Many of you will, this holiday season, struggle to try and buy gifts for your kids. Some of those gifts that you will give and you will receive will be appreciated, others less so. I remember a few years ago someone giving a friend of mine some "Santa Claus underwear". When you're over twenty, you don't want Santa Claus underwear! To do him credit my friend dutifully thanked the giver, for it was obvious that she didn't understand what an embarrassing gift this is for a young adult. I suspect that underwear became a rag that he polished his car with, and I can't blame him. Some gifts just don't need to be given! This holiday some of you may get a gift that you don't want. Never mind! This season isn't about giving gifts, it's about the **Gift God gave to us long, long ago**. This season is about loving the Lord for what He has done, and about passing that love on to others.

This is what Christmas is all about.

As I mentioned this morning, God in His infinite mercy decided to allow Miriam (the lady we call Mary) to be the vessel that would carry the humanity of Christ. This is a mystery that theologians have debated for years and years, how a sinless Christ was born of a sinful woman.

The long and the short of it is that God made it so, so it was so! We would cease our endless debates if we would just let God be God, and be done with it. But that's not our subject tonight. I know that Mary was unworthy - she even admits this. She says:

FOCAL Luke 1:47-49^{KJV} ... my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. {48} For **he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. {49} For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name.**

What God wants us to talk about tonight is the **grateful heart**. God has given us a beautiful example in the life of this little virgin we call Miriam. Look at what she does:

1. When Miriam Is Blessed, She Fellowships In Love With Others Who Are Blessed

The angel of God has told Miriam:

Luke 1:36-37 ... **thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. {37} For with God nothing shall be impossible.**

Miriam's response is to go and see this great thing.

Elisabeth was well past child bearing age, and now she is pregnant. How wonderful! Miriam has been told that she, a virgin, is pregnant with the humanity of the Christ, the Son of the Living God. How marvelous! These two ladies could sing a song.

**O how marvelous! O how wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
O how marvelous! O how wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!**¹

Miriam was drawn to her cousin Elisabeth - she just had to share this joy with her. When Miriam gets within shouting distance of her cousin's house she yells out, "Elisabeth! Elisabeth!", and as she yells

Little John the Baptist, yet in his momma's belly, jumps for joy. Don't any scientist nor any medical quack tell me that the baby in the womb is *without feeling and without humanity*. This is a lie from Satan!

Look at what happened when Elisabeth heard Miriam's cry:

FOCAL Luke 1:41-44^{KJV} ... **Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: {42} And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed [art] thou among women, and blessed [is]**

¹ Words and Music by Charles H. Gabriel, 1905
KJV All texts are KING JAMES VERSION, unless otherwise noted

the fruit of thy womb. {43} And whence [is] this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? {44} For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, submitted to God, and because of that she *immediately knew* that Miriam carried the Messiah's humanity in her womb. Little **John the Baptist**, the Herald of the Lord, was already on the job. He jumped, Elisabeth knew, and God was glorified. There was only one thing missing from this exchange.

There was **no bragging, no pomposity, no one upmanship, no comparison of who was best between either of these dear women**. Elisabeth was blessed, Miriam was blessed, and both realized their blessings were from God. Who was the greater of the two?

Was Elisabeth a lesser believer because she carried only John, and Miriam the greater believer because she carried the Messiah? Did God give the greater to one and not to the other because He loved one more than the other? _____

No! As a matter of fact, these ideas are not even entering into these dear women's heads - and this is more than likely why God was blessing them as much as He was.

The Bible teaches that both prosperity as well as lack of prosperity is in the hand of God.

When we are blessed, we should immediately praise God for His blessing. If someone around us is blessed, we should praise God for that as well. Perhaps this is why God blessed these saints. Elisabeth blessed God because she was unfruitful, without child, and now the Lord in His mercy gave her a child. This is indeed miraculous, but much more the miraculous birth of our Lord Jesus! Here we have a virgin, a woman who is engaged and yet untouched by man. Miriam is also with Child, carrying the humanity of Christ. In both cases, it was *God Who blessed, God who gave the increase*. Neither Miriam nor Elisabeth earned nor deserved what God had done for them, but they repaid the Father in the only coin He enjoys. They had *thankful and praising hearts*. The Bible tells us:

1 Peter 5:6-7 **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:** {7} Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Promotion comes from God, and at His will. Blessing comes from God to glorify Himself, not to glorify us. Once Elisabeth recognized - through the power of God's Holy Spirit - that Miriam carried the humanity of Christ, look how this dear woman responded:

FOCAL Luke 1:46-49 ... **My soul doth magnify the Lord, {47} And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. {48} For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:** for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. {49} For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name.

Miriam first of all *glorified the Lord*. She said, **my soul doth magnify the Lord**. The great preacher C.H. Spurgeon said:

"IT is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing; for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been for a long time present: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord; and when once a soul has a deep sense of God's mercy, and begins magnifying him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds upon: the more you magnify God, the more you can magnify him. The higher you rise, the more you can see; your view of God is increased in extent; and whereas you praised him somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of his exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly, and your soul doth more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord."²

² a sermon intended for reading on LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 30TH, 1891, delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, at the METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,

Miriam had been praising God, this worthy preacher says, since she discovered God was going to use her to bear the humanity of Christ. I agree with my dear brother, but I would take it a step further.

It is possible that Miriam *had a heart continually praising the Lord*, and this may have been the reason that the Lord chose her for such a wonderful task.

I don't know. I have been wrong before, and will be wrong again, but I believe that God calls us to *worship and glorify Him*. When we **humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God** then, as the Apostle says, **He may exalt you in due time**. Does it not say in the Scripture:

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 ... He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. {7} Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for **God loveth a cheerful giver.** {8} And **God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work:** {9} (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth

for ever.

Illustrate Does **God only love a cheerful giver** when it comes to money? Does He love a cheerful giver when it refers to *physical things such as gold, silver, and earthly possessions*? What does the Eternal God need with our baubles, our beads, our trinkets. In the early history of this country our forefathers often took cheap beads and mass produced pieces of glittery junk in amongst the American Indians. These flashy things - usually worthless - were often traded to the poor Indians in return for things which were more valuable, things like *land, gold, silver, and diamonds*. It was only much later that the Indians discovered how they had been lied to. They were given junk for jewels, garbage for gold, lies for land, and they were much the poorer for it.

God wants you to give to your Church, your family, to the poor - but He also wants you to give to Him. He wants you to love Him, to praise Him, to magnify His Name, to glorify Him for what He has given you.

If He has given you much, praise Him much. If He has given you little, then reconsider, for He has given you much in Christ. Is not Heaven yours, if you have believed in Him? Will you not one day walk on the streets of gold in His glorious paradise? Does it not say that:

Revelation 7:16-17 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

{17} For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Could there be a greater blessing than this?

When Miriam is blessed, she goes to be with others who are blessed, and praises God for that blessing.

2. Miriam Doesn't Keep The Blessing To Herself, But Shares It With Others

FOCAL Luke 1:39-55^{KJV} And **Mary arose in those days, and went** into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; ... {46} And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, {47} And **my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.** {48} For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. {49} For **he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name.** {50} And his mercy [is] on them **that fear him from generation to generation.**

Mary knew that the Lord's humanity within her was

God's answer to the sins of the world. The angel Gabriel had told her:

Luke 1:31-33 And, behold, **thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.** {32} **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:** {33} **And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**

Mary knew that this Holy Child was **the Son of the Highest**. She knew that this would be the Savior of the world. So she shared that knowledge as she rejoiced, shared it so that Doctor Luke could record it, shared it with all who would hear. Isn't this a wonderful truth? The Savior has come. Will you not rejoice with her?

It is said that our Old Testament began with a darkened state, with nothingness until God created:

Genesis 1:1 **In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**

The Old Testament began with creation, with the God Who loves us enough to create all things for us, but it ended with the words:

Malachi 4:5-6 **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the**

great and dreadful day of the LORD: {6}
And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The Lord began His Old Covenant with creation, and ended with a warning that Elijah was once more coming, that they needed to repent or be cursed. It is therefore no coincidence that God sent *another Elijah* through the barren woman Elisabeth. This *Elijah* we would call **John the Baptist**, and he would call the whole world away from the curse of sin - not through his power - but through the power of that Baby that Miriam carried.

What a wondrous thing God has done in Jesus!

The last word in the Old Testament was **curse**, but the first **Word** in the New Testament is **Jesus**. Listen Beloved, **He is the Word**.

I don't know if Miriam saw all this. I don't know that she understood every nuance of what Jesus Christ our Savior, her virgin born Son, would do. But she did know that **He was the Son of the Highest**, the very **Son of God**. Miriam wanted to share this blessing - and she did it as she sang praises to her Lord.

When we join together as Christ's Church, it is *always* to praise Him, to honor Him, to glorify God because of what He has done! There is a wonderful illustration of

this in the song of the virgin. As Miriam began to praise God, to sing to Him, to thank Him for the blessings that He gave her in Christ, she said:

FOCAL Luke 1:46-48^{KJV} ... **My soul doth magnify the Lord, {47} And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. {48} For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.**

Miriam did not gloat, nor consider herself worthy - but she praised God just as Elisabeth did. Miriam *sang*, she didn't just mouth the words. She *praised God with all her heart*, and rejoiced in what He did for her. This is a wonderful pattern in Scripture. Many years before another dear woman by the name of Hannah went to the Lord in prayer. She was barren, without child, and though loved by her husband she felt cursed because she was barren. She told the Lord that she would give that child to Him if He would but bless her. When God blessed Hannah with the child who would be called *Samuel*, she praised God by saying:

1 Samuel 2:1-10 "... **My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. {2} [There is] none holy as the LORD: for [there is] none beside thee: neither [is there] any rock like our God. {3} Talk no more so**

exceeding proudly; let [not] arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD [is] a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. ..."

It is God Who blesses, God Who strengthens, God Who has given you your sustenance, your salvation, the very air you breathe. Praise Him! Glorify Him! King David, a man who was *after God's own heart*, said:

Psalms 28:6-7 Blessed [be] the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. {7} The LORD [is] my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Hasn't God blessed you? Then praise Him! Share what He has done with those around you. Speak of His great blessing, of the salvation which has been given to you.

Because Jesus was willing to be birthed into humanity through a poor virgin, He was later able to go to the Cross and bleed and die for you. Only man can bleed and die, and only Perfect Man could do so and be a payment for your sins. God humbled Himself so you could be exalted.

Jesus taught us as His Children:

Matthew 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Luke 14:11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

When you humble yourselves and worship the Lord - for He is worthy of worship - He will *lift you up* in due season. Share what He has done in you. Praise Him for His blessed salvation. Thank Him for lowering Himself to be *born of a virgin*, so He could enter humanity for our sake. He had to be Perfect Man to die for us. He had to be Perfect Man to live for us. He had to be Perfect Man to take our place under God's terrible stream of judgment. Praise God for His glorious salvation!

3. Miriam and Elisabeth Remind Us That The Coin Of Blessing Also Has Another Face

FOCAL Luke 1:51-55^{KJV} He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. {52} He hath put down the mighty from [their] seats, and exalted them of low degree. {53} He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. {54}

He hath [helped] his servant Israel, in remembrance of [his] mercy; {55} As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

We must touch on one more thing, then we will close.

You see, the coin of blessing - just like any coin - always has two faces.

I do not think that these two dear mothers knew all that would befall their sons. That precious son **John the Baptist** would spend his final days in prison, shut up by an evil and lecherous king. John's head would be cut off because this spawn of Satan would love evil more than he thought of God. John's head would be brought to Herod's birthday party on a platter:

Matthew 14:8 And [the daughter of Herodias] ... said, **Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.**

Herod was - we read *sorry* for what he did - but he did it anyway. He has been burning in hell for many years now along with his evil family, and this is but a snowflake compared to the avalanche of God's Eternal Wrath. Yet John died, beheaded for a party wish, the Greatest Apostle Who ever lived.

And what of Miriam, the one we call Mary? Could she see her Son Jesus, years later, hanging on that Cross for our sins? I don't think so. Think how her heart broke when she saw what the Prophet Isaiah foresaw:

Isaiah 52:14 As **many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:**

As Mary stood crying, looking up at her Son, do you not think her heart broke when she saw Him who:

Isaiah 50:6 ... gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Do you believe that these dear mothers clung to one another and cried as they shared their hurt? Yes, I believe they did. The Blessing of God is a two sided coin, yet it remains in His control. God would allow John to be beheaded and Jesus to be terribly wounded, yet in the end God would win. Too often we forget that - in order for blessing to come - there must be a season of sadness. Yet God is in control! As the Psalmist said:

Psalms 126:3-6 The **LORD hath done great things for us; [whereof] we are glad.** {4} Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. {5} **They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.** {6} He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [with him].

That precious saint **Job**, when he suffered so, responded to those who mocked him:

Job 1:21-22 ... Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. {22} In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Praise God! When trials come, praise God! If you have your eyes on Him, He has His eyes on you. Praise God!

May God bless your hearts with these words.

