

**Luke 1:39-56**  
**June 17, 2018**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: What are some of the ways you worship God when it's just you and the Lord? [Let people engage, e.g. prayer, listening to the Spirit while being in the Word, etc.]

Q: How many of us include singing to the Lord?

Q: Is there something you do in your quiet time that hasn't been shared that would be helpful to our class?

**Transition:** It's not news that our private worship of the Lord is deeply personal. I also find myself wondering how "deep" our worship is of him when we're spending time with Him. Is our quiet time truly "quiet?" Are we completely engaged with Him? What could we do to add variety?

We learned last week that Mary was chosen to be the mother of our Savior. Mary also learned from Gabriel, the angel, that her cousin Elizabeth was six months pregnant. Mary is excited! As we read this text, we'll certainly tend to the exchange Mary and Elizabeth have, but where I hope we focus the most is on this important spiritual discipline called "worship." I hope that all of us can deepen our relationship with the Lord BY broadening our **EXPRESSIONS** of worship. Let's start with the interaction between Mary and Elizabeth. Would someone read v.39-45?

**BOOK (NIV 1984):**

V.39:

- At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,

V.40:

- where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

V.41:

- When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

V.42:

- In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

V.43:

- But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

V.44:

- As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

V.45:

- Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.39-40: What did Mary do as soon as Gabriel left her? [Hurried to see Elizabeth]

Q: Why do you think Mary decided to go see Elizabeth? [She was excited about the news Gabriel gave her and wanted to share the joy of that news with her AND the joy of Elizabeth's news!]

Q V.41: What happened when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting? [Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit]

Q: Why do you think the baby leapt in Elizabeth's womb? [John was filled with the Spirit before birth. X-ref Lk 1:15; v.45 indicates that the unborn child felt JOY]

Q: As a refresher, what will be the role of John the Baptist, Elizabeth's unborn child? [He is the forerunner of Jesus Christ. It would be his privilege to introduce the Messiah to the Jewish nation.]

Q V.42-43: How did Elizabeth respond to Mary's greeting? [She loudly exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why I am so highly favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"]

Q: Wait a minute...so here's a puzzler. How does Elizabeth know that Mary is blessed as well as the child she will bear? How did she know Mary was the mother of her Lord?! [Either Mary's greeting was way more than "Hi, how are you?" and contained the good news Gabriel shared with her. Or, the Holy Spirit revealed it to her. Remember that we're told that Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit."]

Observation: The Greek word for "blessed" in v.42 means **well spoken of**. So Elizabeth was conveying the idea that Mary is the most honored of all women. Someone asked last week if this was the passage that elevates Mary to the point that some people worship her. If you will notice in v.42, Elizabeth did not say that Mary was blessed *above* women but *among* women, and certainly this is true. While we don't want to ascribe to Mary that which only belongs to God, neither do we want to minimize her place in the plan of God.

Q v.43: When Elizabeth asks, "Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"...what do we learn about Elizabeth? [Very humble. At a practical level, she could have viewed Mary as just "her cousin!" But we do have a unique circumstance developing!]

Q V.45: What is the one thing that Elizabeth is emphasizing when she says, "Blessed is she that believed?" [Mary's **faith**. Because Mary believed the Word of God, she experienced the power of God.]

True or False: The Holy Spirit accomplishes the will of God for those who **believe the Word of God**. Look at it from the other angle. If we don't trust the Word of God, then we won't be surrendered to the Holy Spirit. That makes us ineffective in His Kingdom.

Transition: Mary embraced being chosen to be the Lord's mother. She belonged totally to the Lord in body, soul and spirit. And because of that, the most natural response she had was to WORSHIP Him through song. In fact, this passage has been called *The Magnificat* because her desire was to magnify the Lord. Let's read the lyrics of v.46-56 and tag Mary's EXPRESSIONS of worship.

**[Read Luke 1:46-56]**

V.46:

- And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord

V.47:

- and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

V.48:

- for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,

V.49:

- for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

V.50:

- His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

V.51:

- He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

V.52:

- He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

V.53:

- He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

V.54:

- He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

V.55:

- to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

V.56:

- Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.46-56: Let's identify her EXPRESSIONS of worship starting with what God did for her:

What God did for Mary

- v.46 Her soul glorified the Lord [Glorifies = magnifies; the fact that the soul is involved is a reminder of how worship is deeply personal and from the heart.]
- v.47 Her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior [Let people engage what that looks like.]
- v.48 She acknowledged God's mindfulness of her attitude of humility as His servant.
- V.49 She praised Him for His holy name and recognized that He has done "great things."

What God did for Us

- V.50 She expressed the attribute of mercy to those who fear Him.

- V.51 She **praised** Him for performing mighty deeds with his arm and scattering the proud.
- V.52 She **praised** God for lifting up the humble and bringing down rulers.
- V.53 She **praised** God for filling the hungry with good things, but sent the rich away empty.

Q: After reading these last several verses, who does the Lord tend to champion? [He took care of the hungry, the poor, the people downtrodden by their rulers. The grace of God works contrary to the thoughts and ways of this world system.]

**X-REF I Cor 1:26-31:** Doesn't this sum up what Mary is expressing? How about us? Do we only boast in the Lord?!

**LOOK:**

Today's lesson invites us to evaluate how we worship the Lord in our personal time with Him. How deep is it? How honest are we being with Him? Are we spending enough time praising Him, or petitioning Him? What are new ways we can worship Him that comes from the heart? Let's listen to how the Spirit speaks to each of us, and then let's implement whatever He shows us.

**Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 170–171). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*Mary's surrender (vv. 34–48).* Mary knew *what* would happen, but she did not know *how* it would happen. Her question in Luke 1:34 was not an evidence of unbelief (cf. Luke 1:18); rather, it was an expression of faith. She believed the promise, but she did not understand the performance. How could a virgin give birth to a child?

First, Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Joseph, her betrothed, would not be the father of the child (Matt. 1:18–25), even though Jesus would be legally identified as the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42). It's possible that some people thought Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph and that Jesus was “born of fornication” (John 8:41). This was a part of the pain that Mary had to bear all her life (Luke 2:35).

Gabriel was careful to point out that the Baby would be a “holy thing” and would not share the sinful human nature of man. Jesus knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He did no sin (1 Peter 2:22), and He had no sin (1 John 3:5). His body was prepared for Him by the Spirit of God (Heb. 10:5) who “overshadowed” Mary. That word is applied to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35). Mary's womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God!

The angel ended his message by giving Mary a word of encouragement: her aged relative Elizabeth was with child, proving that “with God nothing shall be impossible.” God gave a similar word to Abraham when He announced the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18:14). That our God can do anything is the witness of many, including Job (Job 42:2), Jeremiah (Jer. 32:17), and even our Lord Jesus (Matt. 19:26). I personally like the translation of this verse found in the 1901 *American Standard Version*: “For no word of God shall be void of power.” God accomplishes His purposes through the power of His Word (Ps. 33:9).

Mary's believing response was to surrender herself to God as His willing servant. She experienced the grace of God (Luke 1:30) and believed the Word of God, and therefore she could be used by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God. A “handmaid” was the lowest kind of female servant, which shows how much Mary trusted God. She belonged totally to the Lord, body (Luke 1:38), soul (Luke 1:46), and spirit (Luke 1:47). What an example for us to follow! (Rom. 12:1–2)

### **Joy (Luke 1:39–56)**

Now that Mary knew she was to become a mother, and that her kinswoman Elizabeth would give birth in three months, she wanted to see Elizabeth so they could rejoice together. “Joy” is the major theme of this section as you see three persons rejoicing in the Lord.

*The joy of Elizabeth (vv. 39–45).* As Mary entered the house, Elizabeth heard her greeting, was filled with the Spirit, and was told by the Lord why Mary was there. The one word that filled her lips was “blessed.” Note that she did not say that Mary was blessed *above* women but *among* women, and certainly this is true. While we don't want to ascribe to Mary that which only belongs to God, neither do we want to minimize her place in the plan of God.

The thing that Elizabeth emphasized was Mary's *faith*: “Blessed is she that believed” (Luke 1:45). We are saved “by grace ... through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9). Because Mary believed the Word of God, she experienced the power of God.

***The joy of the unborn son, John (vv. 41, 44).*** This was probably the time when he was filled with the Spirit as the angel had promised (Luke 1:15). Even before his birth, John rejoiced in Jesus Christ, just as he did during his earthly ministry (John 3:29–30). As John the Baptist, he would have the great privilege of introducing the Messiah to the Jewish nation.

***The joy of Mary (vv. 46–56).*** Hers was a joy that compelled her to lift her voice in a hymn of praise. The fullness of the Spirit should lead to joyful praise in our lives (Eph. 5:18–20), and so should the fullness of the Word (Col. 3:16–17). Mary’s song contains quotations from and references to the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Psalms and the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. Mary hid God’s Word in her heart and turned it into a song.

This song is called “The Magnificat” because the Latin version of Luke 1:46 is *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. Her great desire was to magnify the Lord, not herself. She used the phrase “He hath” eight times as she recounted what God had done for three recipients of His blessing.

***What God did for Mary (vv. 46–49).*** To begin with, God had saved her (Luke 1:47), which indicates that Mary was a sinner like all of us and needed to trust the Lord for her eternal salvation. Not only had He saved her, but He had also chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:48). He had “regarded” her, which means He was mindful of her and looked with favor on her. No doubt there were others who could have been chosen, but God chose her! The Lord had indeed showered His grace on her (see 1 Cor. 1:26–28).

Not only was God mindful of her, but He was also mighty for her, working on her behalf (Luke 1:49). Mary would have no problem singing “Great Things He Hath Done!” (see Luke 8:39; 1 Sam. 12:24; 2 Sam. 7:21–23; and Ps. 126:2–3) Because she believed God and yielded to His will, He performed a miracle in her life and used her to bring the Saviour into the world.

***What God did for us (vv. 50–53).*** In the second stanza of her song, Mary included *all* of God’s people who fear Him from generation to generation. We have all received His mercy and experienced His help. Mary named three specific groups to whom God had been merciful: the helpless (Luke 1:51), the humble (Luke 1:52), and the hungry (Luke 1:53).

The common people of that day were almost helpless when it came to justice and civil rights. They were often hungry, downtrodden, and discouraged (Luke 4:16–19), and there was no way for them to “fight the system.” A secret society of patriotic Jewish extremists called “the zealots” used violent means to oppose Rome, but their activities made matters only worse.

Mary saw the Lord turning everything upside down: the weak dethrone the mighty, the humble scatter the proud, the nobodies are exalted, the hungry are filled, and the rich end up poor! The grace of God works contrary to the thoughts and ways of this world system (1 Cor. 1:26–28). The church is something like that band of men that gathered around David (1 Sam. 22:2).

***What God did for Israel (vv. 54–55).*** “He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). In spite of Israel’s destitute condition, the nation was still God’s servant and He would help the people fulfill His purposes. God was on Israel’s side! He would remember His mercy and keep His promises (Ps. 98:1–3; also see Gen. 12:1–3; 17:19; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Were it not for Israel, Jesus Christ could not have been born into the world.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth until John was born, and then she returned to Nazareth. By then, it was clear that she was pregnant, and no doubt the tongues began to wag. After all, she had been away from home for three months; and why, people were likely asking, had she left in such a hurry? It was then that God gave the good news to Joseph and instructed him what to do (Matt. 1:18–25).

**Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 202-205)**

*c. Mary's visit to Elizabeth and her return home (1:39–56).*

1:39–45. After learning of the sign, **Mary ... hurried** to see **Elizabeth**. Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in **a town in the hill country**, which probably referred to the hilly region surrounding Jerusalem. As Mary arrived, Elizabeth's baby **leaped in her womb** for joy, **and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit**. Zechariah also was later filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 67). Prior to the day of Pentecost, believers were filled with the Holy Spirit for specific tasks.

Elizabeth's loudly spoken words, **Blessed** (*eulogēmenē*, lit., "well spoken of") **are you among women**, carry the idea that Mary is the most honored of all women. Elizabeth called her **the mother of my Lord**. In Luke the term "Lord" (*kyrios*) often describes Jesus. It has a double meaning. "Lord" would be more important for a Greek reader than would the term "Christ" (meaning "Messiah"), for the Gentiles had not been anxiously awaiting the Messiah. On the other hand the Septuagint often used the word "Lord" (*kyrios*) to translate Yahweh. Again (v. 45) Elizabeth said Mary was **blessed** (*makaria*, "happy") because she **believed** what God had told **her**. This suggests that Mary visited Elizabeth not with a skeptical attitude but rather joyously, to confirm what had been announced to her.

1:46–55. In response to the situation at hand **Mary** recited a song which praised God's favor on her and her people. "The Magnificat," as the song is called, consists almost entirely of Old Testament allusions and quotations. The same is true of the songs of Zechariah and Simeon (vv. 1:68–79; 2:29–32). Mary's song has similarities to Hannah's song (1 Sam. 2:1–10). First, Mary praised God for His special favor on her (Luke 1:46–50). Mary saw herself as part of the godly remnant that had served Yahweh. She called God **my Savior** (*sōtēri mou*) showing an intimate acquaintance with Him. She spoke of His faithfulness (v. 48), power (v. 49), holiness (v. 49), and mercy (v. 50). Second, Mary praised God for His special favor on Israel (vv. 51–55). Through the Child that she was to bear, God was being **merciful to Abraham and his descendants**. Mary was aware that the birth of her Child was a fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham and his people.

1:56. **Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months**, apparently until John was born (cf. v. 36). Mary **then returned home**. The Greek has the words "her home," indicating that she was still a virgin and was not yet married to Joseph.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1509-1510). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**1:46–50, 67–80** The style and themes of the hymns of Mary and Zechariah are Semitic and pre-Christian, indicating that Luke incorporated them from a source earlier than his Gospel. Scholars debate the sources, but there is no reason to doubt that either Mary or Zechariah, both familiar with the singing of the psalms, could have composed them and repeated them as reflections on the auspicious events they had experienced. The hymns must then have been written down and preserved by Jesus' and John's family.

**1:51** God, as a Spirit (Jn 4:24), has no body. The arm of God is a metaphor for His power (Dt 9:29; Jr 32:17).

**1:51–54** This “great reversal” is a common OT motif (1 Sm 2:5–7; Ps 113:7–9; 147:6) and reflects God’s justice (Jr 5:27–29). The classes of raised and lowered are not to be taken absolutely but as a reflection of their spiritual condition. Those cast down are the arrogant and self-reliant (v. 51), and those exalted are the humble (v. 52). These two classes are often related in the OT and first-century Judaism to the rich and powerful on the one hand and the poor on the other. See notes on 6:20–23; 6:24–26; Mk 10:19.

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