

December 11, 2016

MY SOUL MAGNIFIES THE LORD

Luke 1:39-56

Mary did nothing in particular to conceive the Son of God. All she had to do was receive. *“The power of the Most High would overshadow her.”* (Luke 1:35) Mary did nothing to make it happen. But now she had to do something. *“In those days, Mary arose and went with haste...”* to see Elizabeth. I don't know if it's true, but, in some respects, it seems like a good idea for a woman who has just begun to expect the birth of a child to spend some time with a woman who has been expecting a birth for six months. Elizabeth could encourage Mary. Old and experienced Elizabeth could give young Mary a sense of what lay ahead for her with respect to her pregnancy.

Where do you go for encouragement? Where do you go to get a sense of what lay ahead for you? And, what are you willing to receive from God? All too often, we try to *get* God, when what we ought to do is *let* God...let God work His will in our lives.

What greater encouragement could Mary receive than to hear from Elizabeth that the baby growing in her womb seemed to leap for joy at Mary's greeting? There is a powerful message being told here: the son within Elizabeth's womb seemed somehow aware of the presence of the Son of God! Perhaps the Holy Spirit, on a level we do not understand, creates an awareness of the Truth even when we are not aware that a child, let alone an unborn child, could be aware of it. And Elizabeth said, *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”* (v.42) Perhaps there is no greater blessing than to be a life-bearer. And perhaps there could be no greater blessing than to bear the life of Christ.

Mary was indeed blessed. Among all the women of the world, past, present, and future, Mary alone had the honor of receiving Christ within her as more than a spiritual reality. The physical, Flesh and Blood, reality of Jesus was in her womb. That reality becomes absolutely clear to Mary as Elizabeth congratulates Mary on *her* blessing. We don't know *how* Elizabeth knew it, but we *are* told that at the moment of Mary's arrival, Elizabeth was *filled with the Holy Spirit*.

It's interesting... the Holy Spirit and Jesus are One. One with the Father. Three in One! So, in a sense, the physical and spiritual reality that was growing within Mary, extended that spiritual reality to within Elizabeth. Elizabeth must have felt blessed as well. She was *filled* with the Holy Spirit! We too can be filled with the Holy Spirit. We experience it, as Elizabeth did, as a wonderful sense of inspiration; as a heart-warming reality that seems to bubble up within us and overflow with expressions of extraordinary joy. Our cups can overflow only when they are filled.

The same sort of inspiration comes to a child's heart as they discover the mysterious arrival of gifts at Christmas. The wide-eyed wonder and breath-taking exhilaration that creates a sense of awe in our hearts is a part of the spirit of this season. As we grow older, we may not be as wide-eyed; and we may not always have our breath taken away by the special joys of Christmas, I think because we become greater participants in the process that builds the anticipation. But I think that, for the more mature, there is a calmer sense of peace and good will. It is that sense of fulfillment. *“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment...”* Elizabeth said.

There would be a fulfillment. Elizabeth had said, *“Blessed is the fruit of your womb.”* Yes. Jesus is the fruit of Mary's womb. Within her, Mary bears the incarnation of God! Her Son is Emmanuel, “God with us.” Her body is carrying God in the person of Jesus. We should believe that the incarnation began

in the womb of Mary. We can trust the power of God, for we can know that *“with God nothing will be impossible!”* (v.37)

And Mary, who has now become very aware that in her womb was growing the very presence of God in human form, began to feel, in a wonderful way, her cup overflow: *“My soul magnifies the Lord!”* Is it only a feeling, or, can a human being truly magnify the reality of God? Our glorification of Christ, the presence of God on earth, is our first purposed. Our God wants us to glorify Him. God wants us to turn up the volume when He is *on* in our lives! God wants us to zoom in, to magnify Him in ways that not only reveal our faith, but that reveal His goodness, His power, His blessing in the world. God wants us to live in wide-eyed wonder and breath-taking exhilaration. This is not just the spirit of Christmas, but the spirit of faith! True faith! Our tamed lives and subdued attitudes toward the glorious reality of God is almost shameful. True, we may not feel that sense of wonder and exhilaration 24/7, but that’s why we need to zoom in! Zoom in on Christ! Zoom in often!

“My soul magnifies the Lord! And my spirit rejoices in God my savior!” Mary is acknowledging right then and there that she knew that “her baby boy would one day be her savior!” I believe that the answer to that haunting lyric, Mary Did You Know, is Yes! She knew. Listen to what she believed to be the fruit of her womb... *“He who is mighty has done great things for me; and Holy is His Name! God’s mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. God has shown strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his posterity for ever!”* (vs. 49-55)

Mary knew the Son of God before He was born better than did the Apostles when they asked Jesus before He ascended if now was the time He would restore the Kingdom to Israel. (Acts 1:6) She knew that the Kingdom of her Son was not necessarily an earthly reality. In fact, she knew that the mighty would be deposed from their thrones by the grace of God. She knew that the proud would be scattered in the imagination of their hearts. That means that the human notion of privilege and prestige would disappear. We think we’re special in our imaginations, when the truth is that we are sinners and we fall short of the glory of God. We think we are all right all by ourselves, when the reality is that we need a savior.

Mary knew that those of low degree by worldly standards could be exalted by God’s divine standards, because it is faith that makes the difference not worldly wealth. The hungry are filled while the rich are sent away empty. There would be a recognition of what truly feeds us, and those who feed on fame or fortune will be seen as being spiritually starving; while those who feed humbly on the mercy of God will be satisfied.

Mary knew. *“For God has regarded the low estate of His Handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed!”* (v.48)

We can know it too. Because she told us. We need to receive it...the way she received it...just by letting it come to us. We also are overshadowed by the power of the Most High. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. We can magnify the Lord! Let it be with us according to God’s Word!