



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N48 December 1, 2024

CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST

"Mary's Song: Reversal of Fortune"

Luke 1:39-55

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Joy

I have inner contentment
and purpose in spite of my
circumstances .

*"I have told you this so that
my joy may be in you
and that your joy may
be complete."*

John 15:11



Q?

Why did Mary
rejoice?



It's a familiar story, the Annunciation to Mary. God sends the angel Gabriel to "a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name is Mary" (Lk 1:26-27). This occurs in the sixth month of her relative Elizabeth's pregnancy. Elizabeth, a woman "well along in years," is, as you will recall, the wife of an old priest named Zechariah, who has also been visited by Gabriel six months earlier. To him the angel said, "'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord" (vv.13-15a). To Mary the same angel said later, "'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you . . . Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever: his kingdom will never end" (vv. 28, 30-33). Shortly after Mary replies to the angel, "'May your word to me be fulfilled,'" she visits Elizabeth in Judea (vv. 38-40).

Joy is a theme running through both announcements. John "will be a *joy* and delight" to Zechariah and Elizabeth (v. 14) — the angel's words — and upon arriving at Elizabeth's home, the baby John leaps for *joy* in utero (vv. 41, 44) when his mother hears Mary's greeting, and finally, in response to Elizabeth's benediction, "'Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!'" (cf. v. 42), Mary responds, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices* in God my Savior" (v. 46). Mary has

the unique privilege of bearing "the holy one" who "will be called the Son of God" (v.35). The incarnation is truly a reason to rejoice!

The full import of Elizabeth's benedictions cannot be appreciated apart from what the rest of the New Testament teaches about the God-man, Jesus. Consider just two examples:

First, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs" (Heb 1:1-4).

Second, "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:15-20; see also Php 2:5-11).

Read Luke 1:39-55

39 *At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"*

46 *And Mary said:*

"My soul glorifies the Lord

47 *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*
48 *for he has been mindful*

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,
49 *for the Mighty One has done great things for me —*

holy is his name.

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

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

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

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

54 *He has helped his servant Israel,*
remembering to be merciful

55 *to Abraham and his descendants forever,*
just as he promised our ancestors."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "At that time" in v. 39.
- Circle "the baby" in v. 41.
- Circle "blessed" in vv. 42 (2x), 45, 48.
- Circle "my Lord" in v. 43.
- Highlight the clause beginning "who has believed . . ." in v. 45.
- Underline "soul" in v. 46 and "spirit" in v. 47.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 48, 49.
- Bracket "holy is his name" in v. 49.
- Circle "fear" in v. 50.
- Highlight "has" in vv. 51-54.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 52, 53.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 55.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 is traditionally called the "Magnificat." Explain why (see Exposition).
 2. Is Mary distinguishing between two separate and distinct parts of human nature, "soul" and "spirit," in verses 46 and 47? Explain.
 3. The opening two lines of Mary's hymn of praise (vv. 46-47) provide an example of what kind of poetic parallelism—synonymous or antithetical? Explain.
 4. Explain the sense in which God is Mary's "Savior" and what it implies about her.
 5. What follows in verses 48-49 are her two *reasons* (cf. "for") for praising God. Identify them.
 6. To say, "holy is his name" (v. 49)—when "holy" is not *literally* a name—means *what* and *how* so?
 7. Generally speaking, verse 50 implies that Mary's story could be repeated a thousand times over. Explain.
 8. Mary's description of what God *has* done (vv. 51-54) may actually be a description of what her son *will* do. Explain (see note).
 9. If so, *when* will he do these things?
 10. Explain the *comparison* in verse 55.
 11. **Discussion:** Talk about the character of God and character of Mary based on the Magnificat.
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Commentary On The Text

Luke 1:46-55 contains the Magnificat, the lyric poem of Mary, composed following her visit with Elizabeth, described in 39-46. So 1:39-55 consists of two parts: *the visit* (1:39-45) and *the hymn* (vv. 46-55). The term “Magnificat” comes from the first word in the Latin translation of Mary’s song, which in English is “exalts” or “glorifies.” The two parts are clearly related for at least two reasons: 1) “The visit works like a bridge for the narrative. Characters representing John and Jesus finally meet. As the two greet one another, *John, still in the womb, serves as a witness* and leaps within Elizabeth (1:41, 44). This act reflects the initial fulfillment of the remark that *John would be filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb*” (Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 128, italics added); and 2) Mary’s praise is in response to Elizabeth’s threefold benediction, “*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear!*” (v. 42), and “*Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!*” (v. 45). “Mary began to utter praises not when the angel Gabriel brought her the wonderful tidings, but when a woman like herself called her ‘mother of my Lord’ (verse 43). The message of the angel at once assumed for her a living shape when Elizabeth, in whom the promises of the Lord had already been unmistakably realized, saluted her with beatifications” (Norval Gledenhuis, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 84). The second part, *the hymn*, can also be divided into two parts: the reason for praise in terms of Mary’s personal experience (vv. 46-49) and the reason for praise in terms of God’s dealings with his servant Israel in accord with what he promised their ancestors (vv. 50-55).

Regarding *the visit*, Mary belonged to the peasant class, which eked out its living through agriculture and small commercial ventures like carpentry, the profession of both Joseph and Jesus. This group made up 90 percent of the population and bore the burden of supporting the state and the small, privileged class. Their life was grinding, with a triple tax burden: to Rome, to Herod the Great and to the temple. *Rich* she was not! What’s more, women ordinarily married at about 13 years of age in order to maximize childbearing and to guarantee their virginity, so it is likely that Mary’s engagement and pregnancy occurred when she was very young. *Powerful* she was not! Given her low estate—a young girl betrothed to a lowly carpenter in a small village—there was no good reason, humanly speaking, for her to be chosen to be the mother of God’s Son (v. 48). No wonder, she hurried to “the hill country of Judea,”

to see the sign given her by the angel, “Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month” (36). Elizabeth’s benedictions and her baby’s reaction to Mary’s greeting confirmed Gabriel’s announcement and then triggered Mary’s song of praise. “The point for the reader is to believe what God has promised and that he will do what he promises, as Mary did” (Bock, 128).

Regarding *the hymn*, it is a praise psalm as indicated by the opening lines, “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (vv. 46-47a), an example of *synonymous* parallelism—“my soul” and “my spirit” (i.e., “I”), “the Lord,” and “God,” as well as “glorifies” and “rejoices” are all synonymous pairs. What we find in the first part of the hymn are Mary’s own *personal* reasons for praising God (vv. 48-49). In a nutshell, she says that she will be called “blessed,” because future generations will recognize that God has reached out to her in her humility, or put a bit differently, that God has done great things for her—another synonymous pair. “Holy” is the name of the “Mighty One” responsible, which simply means that God is holy, and in this context, “God is holy—that is, unique—because he has exercised power on her behalf that no one else could” (Bock, 129).

In the second part of the hymn, Mary praises God for specific expressions of his moral attributes—e.g., mercy, justice, righteousness, and compassion—shown to his people in line with the promises he made to the patriarchs (vv. 50-55). These deeds are expressed using verbs that typically refer to specific acts in the *past*. However, past tense verbs sometimes refer to habitual behavior and sometimes to future behavior deemed so certain that it is expressed as if it had already happened. One commentator explains: “Is Mary referring to past events? Are these gnomic aorists (that is, referring to what God habitually does throughout time)? Or are they prophetic aorists, with the promises so certain in the text that they are expressed vividly as already being in place? This latter sense best fits the forward-looking introduction to these verses (v. 49). Though what is said here is true of God in all time, his actual vindication of the poor comes, with full certainty, in the future” (Bock, 66). In other words, Mary is most likely referring to future actions of her son, who “will be ‘great’ and ‘will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever’ (vv. 32, 33). The coming of God’s kingdom will bring changes affecting every area of life.

After three months, Mary returned home to Nazareth.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 39 *At that time* Cf. v. 36. "In obedience to the implicit command from Gabriel Mary goes to visit Elizabeth and stays until the birth of her child, thus seeing the fulfillment of the promised sign. Further confirmation of the angel's promise is given by Elizabeth herself under the inspiration of the Spirit, and even the child in her womb indicates its joy. Here is the beginning of John's witness to Jesus" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 77). That she undertook the journey fairly soon is evident from the fact that the angel in verse 36 declared that the pregnancy of Elisabeth was already in the sixth month, and in verse 56 it is stated that Mary, who returned just before the birth of John (verse 57), had remained with Elisabeth for some three months" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 81-82).

v. 41 *the baby* I.e., John (cf. vv. 11-17). "John began his ministry of exalting Jesus in his mother's womb. The virginal conception of Jesus took place between verses 38 and 39" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Luke," 2024 ed., 49, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/john.pdf). "The event [i.e., the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth] possesses little significance on the surface, but for Luke, it is a major literary bridge, since the two major characters of the account meet symbolically through their mothers" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 64).

vv. 42, 45, 48 *blessed* I.e., connotes a sense of privilege and undeserved favor (cf. v. 43). "'Blessed' means specially privileged because of God's favor. Elizabeth evidently meant that Mary was the most blessed among women. Mary was most blessed because her Son would be most blessed among all people" (Constable, 50).

v. 41 *my Lord* "Here 'Lord' is clearly a Christological title and refers to Jesus" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 90). "I think that probably Elizabeth used 'Lord' here in the sense of 'the Son of God' that Gabriel had told Mary she would bear (v. 35). Even though the text does not say that Mary had told Elizabeth what Gabriel had told her, verse 45 indicates that Elizabeth knew what Gabriel had promised Mary. Her inspired words reflect the great superiority of Mary's child over her own son at least. She probably thought that Mary's child would turn out to be the Messiah" (Constable, 51). While Mary is the mother of God's Son, the title "Mother of God" is

misleading. "The Bible never ascribes the title 'Mother of God' to Mary . . . She was in no sense the 'Mother of God,' since [the triune] God had no mother. He is eternal. The title 'Mother of God' implies that Mary was superior to Jesus, which she was not" (Constable, 50).

v. 45 *who has believed . . .* "The blessedness of Mary's faith stands in contrast to Zechariah's lack of faith in 1:20 . . . Mary is 'blessed' here for her faith but is 'most blessed' in Luke 1:42 for the privilege of being the mother of God's Son" (Stein, 91).

vv. 46, 47 *soul, spirit* Both terms are synonyms for "I" — as in "I glorify the Lord" and "I rejoice in God" (Stein, 91).

v. 49 *holy is his name* "This is simply another way of saying, 'He [i.e., God] is holy.' God's holiness here refers not simply to his moral perfection but even more to his acts of righteousness and justice by which he fulfills his covenantal promises to the humble and lowly (Luke 1:48-50, 53-55) and brings judgment upon the unrighteous and haughty (1:51-52)" (Stein, 92).

v. 50 *fear* "To 'fear' God means to cherish reverence and respect for him — not to be afraid, but to honour Him lovingly by avoiding what is contrary to His will and by striving after what pleases Him" (Geldenhuys, 85).

vv. 51-54 *has* "It [i.e., the tense] describes the future work of God's Son with the certainty of a past event" (Stein, 93).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Praise the LORD God for his moral virtue and for his faithfulness
to the promises he made to the patriarchs.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Mary is one of my favorite people in the Bible. Here's this lowly girl, ridiculously young, who for no apparent reason was chosen to be the mother of the Savior of the World. She doesn't argue with the angel or put up a fight (but did she freak out when the angel appeared?). She doesn't talk about how unqualified she is or even debate the mechanics of the impossible. She humbly and meekly submits. When she arrives at Elizabeth's house she immediately launches into song. She praises the Lord. She esteems Him. She sings only honor and glory. Now let's keep in mind this is a potentially terrible, frightening, life-altering event that's about to happen. I have a big question, and I honestly wonder why this part of her story wasn't included in the Bible. What did she say to her parents, and how did they react? Did she tell the whole truth? Did they believe her seemingly farfetched story about a visiting angel? Did they yell and lose their cool? How would you have reacted if Mary was your daughter? Parents, I promise you'll get some doozies thrown your way. Look at your child right now. Yep, that sweet little angel will have a big announcement of some terrible fall from grace one day. How do you plan to handle it? I hope you'll handle it like Jesus handles your mistakes. Extend your child a lifeline of grace and mercy. Help them navigate through the natural consequences. Open your arms and let them know that though you don't love the behavior, you'll always love them. Start practicing now while you've got the chance.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 1:39-55

1. What happened when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting?
2. Mary sings about how she feels about God. What does she say?
3. What great thing did God do for Mary?

What Do You Think?

Why would Mary be called blessed?

What Do You Do?

Write a song that includes your worship of God and the things he has done.

CORE COMPETENCY: Joy

I am happy on the inside no matter what's happening on the outside.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.