

3—Advent—Luke 1.39-56—He Who is Mighty has Done Great Things

I. Introduction

- a. Did you notice anything unusual as we read this morning's text? I hope you did. This isn't one of those creepy conversations that I've heard about when the woman has no obvious clues that she's pregnant but someone seems to think so and asks her, "Are you pregnant?"
- b. When I read this at the beginning of week, I was like wait a minute. How did Elizabeth know these things and how in the world did that unborn baby in her womb know who was in Mary's womb? How did Elizabeth know that her unborn child knew this and meant to reveal him? We are about to explore these questions.
- c. We might also ask as a popular song asks, "Mary did you know?" The fact is, we don't know what all Mary expected her Son her to be. The song asks some of these questions:
 - i. Mary, did you know
That your Baby Boy would one day walk on water?
That your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?
That your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?
- d. I'm not sure she knew some of these things. But we will see what Mary did know from what she sings about.

II. Main Point

- a. He who is mighty has done great things and the Holy Spirit makes these great things known which breaks out into worship!

III. Outline

- a. Mary travels in haste to Elizabeth
- b. The Hymn of Elizabeth
- c. The Hymn of Mary—The Magnificat

IV. Exposition

- a. As we break into these verses, we hear of Mary traveling to the hill country of Judah.
 - i. We did not discuss it last week, but the angel, Gabriel, included information that no one else knew about.
 1. (Lk. 1:36-37) ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God."
 2. God had sent his messenger to Zachariah concerning the upcoming pregnancy of his barren wife.
 3. When the messenger returns to deliver a message to Mary, God also knows that Elizabeth has conceived a child and what month pregnant she is. Indeed, he did the impossible in this conception too.
 - a. I take great comfort in the God who knows all things and keeps up with these things and does these great things!
 4. Did you wonder when Mary conceived the Christ Child last week? It seems from verse 36 that it had already happened before the angel left...your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son!!!
 - ii. So, having been told about these miraculous conceptions, she rose and went with haste into the hill country.
 1. As you ought to know, there are many fulfillments from the OT Scriptures throughout this story.
 - a. The exact same form of "haste" was used in Exodus 12 to describe how they were to eat the Passover meal as they leave Egypt.

- i. If this word alone was all there was then we might not think too much of it.
 - ii. But the 400 years in Egypt and 400 years of silence from God before the angel came to Zachariah and Mary are a piece of this puzzle.
 - iii. In verse 46, Mary's opening line sounds very much like Hab. 3:18 where God promises to come and save his people. And all the places the God rescues his people are compared to the Exodus just like this one.
 - iv. In verse 51 is almost shorthand for the exodus when God saves with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.
 - b. Why did God instruct them to eat the Passover in haste?
 - i. (Exod. 12:11-13) you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.
 - c. Why does any of this matter?
 - i. Because eternity hangs in the balance. Heaven and hell. Salvation and judgment.
 - 1. This is the new and better exodus to save us from slavery to sin. God will return in judgment and if there's no blood of Lamb for us we will all perish forever!
 - 2. And as Mary hastens to the hill country, she carries in her womb the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!
 - 3. Everything depends on this Child who was born to die!
 - a. And why? In the song Hark! The Herald Angels Sing it says:
 - i. God and sinners reconciled
 - ii. Born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth!
- iii. Mary arrives at the house of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth.
 - 1. Luke doesn't tell us what she said.
 - a. But notice what happens to Elizabeth and her unborn child responds in verse 41.
 - i. (Lk. 1:41) ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
 - ii. When Elizabeth heard the greeting, the baby leaped in her womb.
 - 1. If we stopped here, we might brush this off as the normal movements of a baby in the womb.
 - 2. And at this point that's really all we can expect.
 - 3. But mom is about to explain what happened in a song that follows.
 - 2. But before we look at this amazing song, let's take note that Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - a. So, I was trying to think of an example in scripture to help us understand what Elizabeth is about to do. Do you recall in Daniel when King Nebuchadnezzar

ordered that the counselors come and tell him the dream he had and its meaning?

- i. Can you imagine someone demanding this? Who can do such a thing?
 - ii. Well, as the story unfolds, we know that God revealed to Daniel the dream and the interpretation.
 - iii. Like Daniel said when asked by the King: (Dan. 2:26-28) "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?"
²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."
 - iv. This same God reveals who is in the womb of Mary too!
- b. Now that we are ready to see this through the lens of Scripture, let's be amazed by the work of God through Elizabeth and her unborn child as she reveals why her baby leaped at Mary's greeting. The Hymn of Elizabeth—revelation of the coming child to be born of the woman to crush the head of the serpent.
- i. Verse 42 begins with a very familiar phrase that is used over and over to indicate divine revelation: "She cried out with a loud voice."
 1. If you've read through the book of Revelation, you hear this frequently as the angels deliver what God is about to do.
 - ii. Now for the amazing revelation: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"
 1. If you follow sports on social media, many student athletes are posting the normal "I'm blessed to receive an offer from" such and such school.
 2. When we say we are blessed, let's not forget what we mean by that. We mean something has happened TO US.
 - a. It means we didn't deserve it. It means someone acted towards us in a way that we might have hoped for but could not have caused it.
 - b. Blessed refers to those receiving God's favor, regardless of the circumstances.
 3. So, through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth reveals that God has acted in Mary for the coming Savior that she and the world do not deserve!
 - iii. The Holy Spirit causes Elizabeth to say these things, he also causes Elizabeth to realize who she really is in this world.
 1. Notice her humility in verse 45: Why me? Why come to me? Why does the mother of my Lord come to me?
 2. Wait. Did you hear that? She knows Mary is with child and she claims this child to be her Lord?
 - iv. She explains how she knows this in verse 44.
 1. (Lk. 1:44) ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
 - a. The leaping unborn baby revealed Jesus was in Mary's womb. How can this be?
 - i. We were told back in verse 15 about this baby: (Lk. 1:15) and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.
 - ii. This unborn child is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit even while in his mother's womb.
 - iii. That's the power of God! Do you see this? Are you amazed by this? Isn't this incredible?
 1. Am I foolish for believing this? Isn't that what Elizabeth is saying? How else would she have known?

- b. Unborn baby John is already acting as the forerunner to make Jesus known!
 - i. By the Spirit John made it known to his own mother from inside the womb.
 - 1. I think he assured Mary of this too!
 - ii. By the Spirit, his mother understands the leaping for joy to reveal the Christ Child, Savior of the world!
 - 1. Jesus is the source of joy—Joy to the world, for Lord has come!
- c. Furthermore, Elizabeth knows the Lord has spoken to Mary about these things and that she believed!
 - i. Mary's blessedness rests on the work of God.
 - 1. He sent his messenger to reveal the divine purposes for the salvation of his people.
 - 2. The blessing of God caused Mary to believe these things.
 - ii. And Elizabeth knows this WITHOUT Mary even telling her!
 - 1. It would be odd very boastful for Mary to have said this in her greeting.
- v. Let's be amazed at God! Let's be forerunners like John.
 - 1. We too have the ministry of making Jesus known. We have been given the Holy Spirit. We are his witnesses. Like the song we sang, "Go tell it on the Mountain that Jesus Christ is born."
- c. How will Mary respond to this? She response with a song: The Magnificat—a psalm of praise!
 - i. Mary did not question her aunt...how did you know these things? Rather the very fact that God makes these things known this way causes Mary to break out into worship!
 - ii. And in her worship, we discover what this teenage peasant girl from Nazareth knows:
 - 1. Her opening line sounds a lot like what Joshua read from Habakkuk 3. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."
 - a. These are promises of the Prophets and particularly Habakkuk, and Mary knows that salvation and judgment are coming.
 - b. "Mary is alluding to a text that speaks of the Lord going forth as a warrior to enact judgment on his adversaries and to save his people." (TGC article)
 - i. Like in the exodus, God was coming to judge the nations and save his people. "He who is mighty" refers to a mighty warrior. It's the same word used for David's mighty men. It often speaks of God fighting for his people valiantly! But how does he come to fight? By sending his Son in the flesh!
 - ii. "The point of the passage is that while God's judgment on the nations will be terrible, God's salvation of his people will be wonderful. That's what led the prophet to exult and rejoice. From the context of Habakkuk, Mary would have understood that the coming of Messiah meant judgment for God's enemies, but salvation for his people." (TGC Article)
 - 2. As we have already discussed, Mary alludes to the exodus like so many psalmists do when they sing praises!
 - a. (Exod. 6:6-7) 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

- b. (Ps. 98:1-2) Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ² The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- 3. Mary looked forward to the day when the evil and injustices of this world would be reversed! Every problem that exists in this world will be destroyed and fixed forever!
 - a. In other words, the humble will be exalted and the exalted will be humbled.
 - i. Humble now, exalted later. Exalted now, humbled later.
 - b. She is just a teenage, peasant girl from Nazareth. Her husband isn't any better off. When it comes to offering the appointed sacrifice at the birth of Jesus they have to go with the cheapest option.
 - c. The self-made men of the world who would never say they are blessed but that they did it. They made it. They caused it.
 - d. The reversal Mary sees is scattering of the proud who in their thoughts give no thanks to God...have no need for God...have no desire or hunger for God.
 - i. The mighty ones will be brought down from their thrones. Those who think they are the savior of the world.
 - ii. The parallel to those of humble estate are the hungry to which God will fill their mouths with good things!
 - iii. The rich will be sent away EMPTY!
- 4. Mary understands that the Messiah will right all the wrongs.
- 5. She understands that God will keep all his covenant promises that he has made to their fathers, to Abraham and his offspring...FOREVER!
 - a. Indeed, like we read in Habakkuk where the prophet pleaded with the Lord TO REMEMBER MERCY...he will remember!
- iii. While Mary knows a lot about what this great salvation was going to accomplish. She didn't know how the Messiah was going to accomplish this!
 - 1. But the blessings she claims are wrapped up in the Child in her womb.
 - a. As we asked earlier from the song whether she knew this: This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you?
 - 2. Mary sings: (Lk. 1:48-49) all generations will call me blessed;
 - a. Why? ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me...actually to me.
 - i. To her...for her...for us!
 - ii. What great things has God done to Mary?
 - iii. God coming in the flesh who is in her womb will be the Savior and Redeemer of his people!
 - b. A song goes like this:
 - i. He Who is mighty has done a great thing
Taken on flesh, conquered death's sting
Shattered the darkness and lifted our shame
Holy is His name
Oh, the freedom our Savior won
The yoke of sin has been broken
Once a slave, now by grace
No more condemnation (*He Who is Mighty, Sovereign Grace Music*)

V. Response

- a. To humble yourself, is to come bow the knee to King Jesus! It is to come in repentance and faith and praises of thanksgiving for salvation in Jesus!
- b. Indeed, God sent his Son to save that remnant. O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.
- c. But also he came for others too. "O come all ye faithless, joyless and defeated! Christmas is for the weary, for the messed-up, for the broken. If your life isn't Instagrammable, Christmas is for you." (Sam Allberry)
- d. If you know the amazing work of Christ in your life, then can you say with Mary: My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior?
- e. Are there any who need to be set free? Your heart is bond with the chains of sin. You are devoured by the guilt you feel. You walk in darkness. You hide in the shadows.
 - i. There's good news for you! Come make room in your heart by unloading all your sin and guilt on Jesus.
 - ii. He has come that men may no more die!
 - iii. As we sing this last song, may this be the beginnings of your prayer to God for repentance and faith.
 1. O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in