

Luke 1:39 - 45
Leaping With Joy
Sunday December 20th, 2015

Have you ever had such good news that you had to share it with someone else? Not just had to share it but felt compelled to share it? There was a “burning in your bones” until you shared it.

And just not anybody would do!!! You had to have a special someone, someone you knew and loved. Someone who understood you. Someone who had experienced something like you did!

The news was so great, so wonderful, so personal and overpowering it brought joy mixed with wonder, tinged with fear and hope.

If you’ve experienced anything like this then you have an insight into what Mary felt as she journeyed to and then met her relative Elizabeth.



Right before our verses start today, Mary had been told by the angel Gabriel, that she, a virgin, was going to bear the Messiah - the Son of God.

What joy! What sorrow! What glory!

This sermon today has 3 parts. **The first is joy, the second sorrow, the third, glory.**

First joy!

Mary had to share her great and wondrous - her fearful - news that she was soon to bear the Son of God. Who would understand? Who could understand? Who would believe what she could hardly believe? Who could confirm what she knew in her heart was true?

Ah.....

Her relative, Elizabeth, was in her sixth month. In her old age, Elizabeth had conceived.



She would know what it was like to be touched by the wondrous hand of God! She would know how to receive and celebrate the joy that was coming.

So, **“Mary journeyed with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth. At that moment the Holy Spirit fell on Elizabeth”** and experienced two signs from God. The 1st sign of the presence of God in this scene was that the Holy Spirit fell on her. The 2nd and most notable sign was that her baby, John—later known as John the Baptist—leaped in her womb for joy. Think of that—the baby in her womb leaped for joy!

When the Holy Spirit fell on her, it gave her 4 oracles, or prophecies, or words of knowledge as they say in Pentecostal circles.

The 1st prophecy was, **“In a loud voice she exclaimed: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!”** Elizabeth, without being told by Mary, knew she was pregnant and knew the importance of the child.

The second prophecy came in the form of a question like on Jeopardy was the baby that Mary carried was her Lord - He was the Messiah. **“But why am I so favored, that the MOTHER OF MY LORD should come to me?”**

The 3rd prophecy was that **her baby John leaped for joy** at Mary’s greeting. John’s leaping was both sign and prophecy. John the Baptist’s work of preparing the way for the Messiah/declaring the presence of the Messiah had already begun. Later in fact, Jesus would

rejoice that the Lord of heaven and earth, who had hidden things from the wise, had revealed them to infants. (Luke 10:21)

And the 4th prophecy was that **“Blessed is she who believed the word of God”!**

That’s the prophecy we concentrate on this day, for **“blessed is not only “she” who believes the word of God, but blessed is “he”.”**

Joy comes from hearing the word of God and doing the Word of God. Mary could have refused to raise the Son of God, but through her obedience she experienced Joy - the joy of being the Mother of God.

Today the word of God that brings joy when believed comes to us from the Bible - the Word of God - read, studied and preached.

Still today when we hear the word and believe, we have joy.

Ah, but with the joy of believing the Word also can come sorrow.

With belief and faith come sorrow and glory.

And now sorrow, when we’re chosen by God it is a fearful and wonderful, at times sorrowful thing. When God shows us His will in the word and we obey we can receive a crown of joy and sometimes a cross of sorrow.



No life better illustrates this than Mary: chosen to bear the Son of God, chosen to lie sobbing at His feet as He was crucified, dead and buried.

Let’s watch this video of a modern day Mary and her baby boy, Jesus. Let’s pretend for a moment God chose a pregnant teenager in our community, in our day. Imagine Jesus as a boy hanging out at the

park with Mary - Mary, the Mother of God whose mind also held the prophesy that a sword would pierce her heart.

Observe the bittersweet, the joy and sorrow, mingled together, for in her heart, she knew Jesus was born to suffer and die.

Over the manger in many depictions is a star in the form of a cross and two of the gifts given at His birth were funeral spices: frankincense and myrrh. Joy mixed with sorrow. Myrrh mixed with vinegar and offered him on the cross

Watch for a moment now. Feel and believe the sorrow of the chosen who believe!

ROLL CLIP MARY PART 4 "FULFILLED/UNFULFILLED"

Now Glory - Glory - what a strange word today. It usually refers to the afterglow of football players on a winning team, or soldiers in a winning battle.

But rarely if ever do we associate it with "belief and obedience to the word of God." But when we believe and obey we participate in the glory of God- we bring glory to God.

Oh, yes - we can say - Mary achieved glory because she was the mother of Jesus, the mother of the Messiah, the mother of the Son of God. We can think there's only one of her and there will only be one; so glory is reserved just for her.

And oh, yes, there's Billy Graham and Mother Theresa, and the pastors of these mega-churches, but you and me, have glory? You and me participate in the glory of God!?

Yes, you have glory when you **read the Word of God, believe and act on it.**

The Word says to serve. All can do that. The word says to love - all can do that.

You know there are members of this congregation who constantly battle the infirmities and diseases of old age. But boy can they love, and boy o boy, can they make people feel welcomed, loved and like family!

If you get anywhere near them, they will love you into this church, into the fellowship of God! And I see people sitting here today because they were loved into this church by these people.

That's glory - that's glory of God that you can see and touch and feel and laugh with. That's the word of God believed and lived with power. Its just plain fun!

And some might say - I only cook, or teach, or paint, or stuff bulletins or envelopes, or landscape, or usher, or greet, or sing, or worship the Lord. How is that glorious?

If you do it in obedience to the Word of God to you that you found in the Word, then you have part of the glory of God! You participate in the glory of God.

The Holy Spirit has called you and gifted you for serving in the Church for **1 Corinthians 12:7 says "to each has been given a gift of the Holy Spirit, for the good of the Church."**

This passage read today and in fact all of Luke and Acts emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit works within the Church and between members of the Church.

So how do you know that God, through His Word, has called you to a specific ministry, humble or prominent, in or outside the church?

Remember, Mary went to Elizabeth and Elizabeth confirmed the gift that Mary carried. Her prophecies confirmed the Word of the Angel that Mary carried the Messiah.

We need one another to confirm the gifts and calling of the Holy Spirit that we find in God's Word to find and be a part of the glory of

God. “Wherever two or more are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them,” Jesus said. His Spirit is with us in this moment. His Spirit has called you to this place, this day, this moment to hear His word.

In the fellowship of Christians he’ll confirm your call, your service be it cooking (not me!) or preaching and teaching (me and many of you). What has God called you to? Who with great joy can you go to, to share your joy, confirm your calling?

A story is told of a young farmer out plowing his field in the country. As he plowed, he prayed that God would guide him in his life. To his amazement, he looked up and saw as clear as news type the letters “G.P.C.”, made by three clouds in the sky.

He stopped his tractor immediately, jumped off and went to preach Christ in every little Church in the immediate neighborhood of his farm. He took G.P.C. to mean Go Preach Christ. Week after week he labored - church after church told him not to come back because he was a terrible preacher - disorganized, he mumbled his words, and he went on and on and on, until small children would stand up and cry out, “If we pay him will he let us go home?”

Finally, very discouraged, he went to talk to his preacher, something he hadn’t done before. He said I was so sure that the letters G.P.C. I saw in the sky meant Go Preach Christ, but I am so terrible at it. I’m not sure anymore”.

His pastor said to him, “You’re the best dog gone farmer in the whole county. You have the best land. Anything you plant grows like weeds. Those letters G.P.C. were God telling you NOT to Go Preach Christ but to Go Plant Corn!

My friends we are all uniquely gifted to do what God’s Word calls us to do. For some, it is to go plant corn for the glory of God, for one it was to be the mother of God, for all of us it is to love. None of us are too old or too young to love or be loved. Has a grandchild ever said, “You’re too old to love?”

And when we find our calling and the One who calls us, we will leap for joy!!! We each will be preparing the way of our Lord into other people's lives through our love like John did for Jesus.

My friends, we need each other to confirm the Word that comes to us as we read and study the Bible, the Word of God. We need our callings confirmed in fellowship with one another. That's why there is a church and Christian fellowship.

And when we do, when we find our calling, we will find Joy, Sorrow and Glory.

We will find the wisdom of an Old Spanish saint who prayed for his people, **"May God deny you peace and give you glory."** May God deny you peace and give you glory!

Whatever service God calls you to do, no matter how humble, if you work at it so diligently that at times it gives you no peace, you will participate in the joy, the sorrow and the glory of God!

To the Glory of Him who calls us and saves