

## Luke 1:39-56

Narrator: In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry,

Elizabeth: You're so blessed among women,  
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!  
And why am I so blessed that  
the mother of my Lord visits me?  
The moment the sound of your  
greeting entered my ears,  
The babe in my womb  
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.  
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,  
believed every word would come true!

Narrator: Mary responded:

Mary: My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.  
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—  
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!  
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,  
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.  
His mercy flows in wave after wave  
on those who are in awe before him.  
He bared his arm and showed his strength,  
scattered the bluffing braggarts.  
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,  
pulled victims out of the mud.  
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;  
the callous rich were left out in the cold.  
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;  
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.  
It's exactly what he promised,  
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

Narrator: Mary stayed with Elizabeth for 3 months and then went back to her own home.

## Finding Joy

In our reading today, Mary declares, “I’m the most fortunate woman on earth!” Can you believe that? True that there have been lots of statues and churches and cathedrals that have been built in her honor and named after her, and there have been lots of songs and poems written about her, but was she really the most fortunate woman on earth at the time?

I would bet that if a lot of you folks out there put yourself in her shoes you might not feel so fortunate. A poor, pregnant, unwed teenage girl living in Palestine in the first century, I don’t know how *fortunate* you could really feel.

- Yes, an angel had appeared to her and told her that she was blessed,
- And yes, the angel had said that the child she was bearing belonged to God.

But consider her present predicament: pregnant and unwed in a very conservative community – so conservative in fact that if the community discovered her condition she could be executed.

You and I could likewise look at our predicaments and feel overwhelmed. We need only turn on the news to discover disasters and attacks and murders and corruption around the world, events that make us feel vulnerable, at risk, frightened. And if we add to that the struggles we face in our personal lives – our job insecurity, our health, the rough spots we go through in marriage, financial struggles – we can feel distraught, discouraged, and frightened.

Enter Mary, with so many things that could consume her mind, and yet despite all the negatives she’s able to declare that she is the most fortunate among women. Is she blind? Is she deluded? Or is something else going on in her mind?

The truth is that Mary simply trusts in God, and the God she trusts in is a God who comes to the lowly. If you read her song, her *magnificat*, you find that it’s a sort of protest song; it declares the triumph of the humble over the haughty, of the oppressed over the oppressor. Mary celebrates God’s decision to raise up the lowly and bring down the mighty.

And because of that we can all take courage. Because we’ve all been brought down at times. But God does not forsake us; in fact he comes to us in our lowly state and bids us to trust him. And I’m not just talking about being oppressed politically or socially; all of us are oppressed by sin. And God’s entry into the world tells us that even our sinfulness does not alienate us from God’s love. He comes to us regardless. He comes to save us. He comes to redeem us.

And so we find our joy in Christ. Regardless of how low we may feel, as a result of persecution or as a result of our own sin, God comes to us. God saves us. God loves us. That brings us joy, even in the midst of our struggles. And our mission is to help others find that joy in the midst of their struggles. We need not fear, but only trust in God, to bring us through the storms we face. Help us to find our peace and joy in Christ, that others may do likewise.