

## The Song of Elizabeth

Advent Midweek #2 – 12/11/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 1:39-45 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 42, “...and [Elizabeth] exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you (Mary) among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’”

### Introduction

- ⊗ As sinful people, we have a habit of treating glory as a zero-sum game. In other words, we believe that the only way we can obtain glory is to take it from someone else. The more glory our neighbor has, the less we have, or so we think.
  - ➔ To use a musical analogy, we don’t believe in “glory duets.” If someone else is singing, the only way to make ourselves more glorious is to take the microphone and sing a song that praises us instead.
- ⊗ This is why, I suppose, our society has a bunch of unwritten rules trying to regulate this impulse. There are certain idioms and catch phrases that warn us about this, such as: “Don’t upstage him” or “Quit stealing her thunder.” There is a well-known rule that women other than the bride are not supposed to wear white at the wedding. Neither is it acceptable to start boasting about your own work-related accomplishments at another man’s retirement ceremony or why a young woman shouldn’t announce her own pregnancy at her friend’s baby shower.

### I. Mary arrives and tests social norms

- ⊗ And yet, that last example is essentially what the Virgin Mary appears to do when she greets her cousin Elizabeth. Now granted, Elizabeth may not exactly be having a baby shower at that moment.
  - ➔ But think about it: her entire pregnancy is essentially a prolonged celebration, for a couple reasons. 1) Elizabeth is old; far too old to be having children, especially when you consider that she’s been barren her entire life. And 2) an angel told her husband, Zechariah that Elizabeth’s child was going to be a prophet; something the Israelites haven’t seen in about 300 years.
- ⊗ Both of these are extremely amazing circumstances. Here we have what amounts to a spotlight from God, glowing on Elizabeth. She is unbelievably blessed right now. This is her moment to sing the song of glory; the song praising God for the wonderful things He has done for her.
  - ➔ But now, when Mary comes to visit, the verses following verse 40 seem to imply that Mary wasted no time in telling Elizabeth what she has heard from the angel Gabriel; that she is going to give birth to the Christ Child; the promised Messiah; the Son of God; the Savior of the world.
  - ➔ It’s as if Mary is walking into her cousin’s baby shower, grabbing the microphone, and singing, “My pregnancy is even more miraculous than yours, and my baby is going to be even more important than your baby.”

### II. But Elizabeth sings to and with Mary.

- ⊗ But instead of being filled with sorrow or jealousy in this moment, how does Elizabeth react? She is filled with great joy because, as a Christian; as one who believes in God’s promise of salvation growing in Mary’s womb, Elizabeth knows that glory is not a zero-sum game.
  - ➔ Elizabeth breaks with the social norm. She avoids the sin of petty selfishness that would have her think that it has to be either her or Mary singing the song of glory. And instead she steps up to the preverbal microphone and sings to and with Mary.

✘ Verses 41-44 again, “When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.’”

➔ It is because Elizabeth knows and trusts in God that she knows and believes that Mary’s baby is her – Elizabeth’s – glory too! That’s why Elizabeth sings what she sings after feeling John the Baptizer leap for joy in her womb as the mother of God and God in human flesh both come into his presence with his mom.

✘ As verse 41 tells us, “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” That’s why she is filled with such awe and humility. Her question to Mary is inspired by God Himself, “Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (v. 43). You see, in faith, Elizabeth is actually glad and excited to share the spotlight with Mary. In fact, she even gives it to Mary, because she knows that the God/Man who is going to save her from her sins is now the tiny unborn child in Mary’s womb.

### III. We don’t often think or act like Elizabeth

✘ But friends, let’s get real with each other for a moment. You and I, we don’t think like Elizabeth, do we? Rather, we too often think like the world around us and we live each day playing the self-centered “zero-sum game;” singing the “I deserve-the-glory” song.

➔ So, when Christ and His Word now comes into our presence – even then we still don’t want to yield the spotlight; even when that spotlight is shining on things that are far less glorious than what Elizabeth had surrounding her.

✘ So, for example: when the Word teaches and calls to us, “Look, Jesus is here forgiving your sins. Jesus is here to heal your broken hearts and cast out your demons and give you His gift of eternal life. So put away your pride. Let go of your sins. Come, find rest in the arms of your Shepherd and God.”

➔ How do we respond? Instead of singing the praises of Mary’s Son like Elizabeth did, we sing our own praises. We worship our own pride. We boast of our own righteousness, hoping that all the world will notice and praise us.

➔ That’s not all. We are quick to sing the songs of anger toward those who have sinned against us; thinking that tearing them down will clothe us in more glory. We sing songs of despair as we look out at the world, thinking that lamenting the filth of our neighbors can somehow make us look clean. In all of this then, we act out with the notion that by ripping the microphones out of other people’s hands, we can somehow make their glory our own; hoping and believing that this will make us more worthy of love and attention.

✘ Where do those thoughts and actions lead us? Sadly, it means that when we hear Christ singing to us; calling us to turn from our sins, we end up singing, “I don’t care how good Your news is Jesus. I’m the important one right now. This is my day; my moment. You can just butt out of my life right now, please.”

### IV. Christ wraps us in His glory.

✘ But you see it’s not your moment. In fact, the very existence of your life belongs to Jesus; the same Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary; is the same Jesus that came into this world not to take the spotlight away from you but to embrace you in His love; to fill you with His grace and to welcome you into His spotlight.

→ As we talked about last week, Elizabeth knew full well that her baby would grow up to be John the Baptizer; the one sent not to be the Christ, but to prepare the way for the Christ. The child in Mary's womb, He's the One who would grow up to die for the sins of the world; who would become the crucified and risen Savior of us all.

✘ Jesus is where the spotlight must be firmly fixed even here in Elizabeth's life and song. As the nails pierced His hands and feet; as He hung on that cross with the lights of all of history burning onto His head, Jesus is the one who shed His blood to take away your sins; to take away your pride and arrogance; to take away your refusal to hear His perfect Word.

→ As His body was broken apart on that cross, Jesus also took away all your self-worship and idolatry. Even as He took His final breath and cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk 23:46), Jesus sang the song that made you a sinner no more; the song that wrapped you in His glory; that is bringing you into the light of His eternal presence and victory.

## **Conclusion**

✘ You understand what that means, dear Christian? When Jesus lifted up His head from death, He essentially cleared His throat, and told you, me and every one of us in this world that believes in Him, that the hour has come for us to sing with Him forever; for us to join in with the song Elizabeth sang; the song of salvation for all who believe.

→ "Blessed is the fruit of [Mary's] womb," Elizabeth sang (v.42). Now we can sing that song too, because the holy fruit, the Lamb of God, has blessed you right along with Elizabeth and Mary. He has washed you clean. He has fed you with salvation. And in the bright light of His Word, He has shown you that you don't have a God who competes with you for glory.

✘ No, you have a God who has given you His glory so that you can sing the song of salvation with Him forever! Amen.