

Title: Blessed is she who believed  
Text: Luke 1.39-45  
Theme: The amazingly personal plan of God  
Series: Luke #4  
Prop Stmtnt: God's sovereign will is beautifully personal and so counterintuitive.

Read Text:

It is common to see the words "faith" and "joy" sprinkled in holiday displays and with good reason. There is a direct connection between genuine faith and having joy, or being blessed. One of the things that often contributes to your understanding of the point of a particular text is to see if there are words that are repeated. Here, that is the case with the word, "blessed." In the span of 7 short verses, it appears 3 times. It shows up a quite a bit in the NT, and here, at the beginning of Luke's gospel, there is a blessing announced to Mary and Jesus, Luke ends his gospel with one announced to the disciples. As this gospel account unfolds, we are going to see more and more evidence for the connection between faith and joy or faith and being blessed. Here, Mary is declared to be blessed, because of Jesus. That is really it! If you have Jesus, you are blessed.

1. **Genuine faith is displayed in our actions.** (39-40)

Monday night after dinner I decided to go back to the hospital and check on my father-in-law. I happened to be in his room when the night shift was taking over for the day shift and I met the nurse who would be taking care of him. She seemed to be just really kind and caring, which is always a gift to the family. Dad, died during her shift. Cathi and I found out that it was the first time that she had experienced one of her patients dying on her shift. She was a young nurse and you could tell that she really loved her patients. Many of you have been in a similar situation and you know that there is a lot that happens and has to happen, but in spite of all of that, she told Cathi that she would like to pray with us before we left. Of course, we took her up on that offer. She did not know that I was a pastor. Clearly, we were much older than she was, and yet, she was sweetly bold in offering and requesting that. So, we joined hands, and she prayed. She told us a bit later that she prayed before every shift asking the Lord to use her in whatever way to put him on display to others and we assured her with thankful hearts that the Lord had answered that prayer. I know that many of you do exactly the same thing. Nurses, doctors, technicians, teachers, line-workers, garbage collectors, accountants, attorneys, sales people, and drivers, your trust in God shows up in doing things that display how deep your faith really is. Genuine faith is displayed in our actions.

The book of Romans answers the question: How can we (sinners) be declared righteous and therefore accepted by a perfectly holy God? The answer is, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The book of James answers the question: How do we know if that faith is genuine? The answer is: genuine faith is displayed in our works. Genuine believers are marked by a persevering faith-driven obedience.

Here is a classic example. The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and announces to her that she is going to be the earthly mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. She responds to this announcement to her from God (through Gabriel) with belief. She believes and we looked at v.38 where Mary is leaning into this incredible, overwhelming mission. Now, she did not ask for a sign to confirm this to her, but Gabriel gave her one. He told her that her cousin Elizabeth, *“in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her.”* (36)

So, Mary leaves Nazareth and goes with urgency into the hill country, to a town in Judah. The hill country of Judah was south of Jerusalem and would have been 80-100 miles away. This trip would take Mary around 4 days to complete. This trip was further evidence that Mary completely believed what God had revealed to her.

So, what if, you were arrested for being a Christian? Would there be enough evidence to convict you? If not, I am not challenging you to “do better.” I am challenging you to have a heart to hear with Jesus. Do you really believe God’s Word? When you push everything else away, do you, in your heart of hearts, believe what God says? And this really is who you are? I pray that is the case. Genuine faith is not only displayed in our actions, but genuine faith is the locomotive and joy is the caboose. The one comes before the other, but it brings the other and the reason is because of the Holy Spirit.

## 2. The Holy Spirit is an incredible gift to the children of God. (41-44)

The Holy Spirit was present and active in the OT, but his ministry is highlighted and unpacked in the NT. In fact, the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit is one of the themes of Luke’s gospel which is going to be a sweet benefit to us as we work our way through this book. Our understanding, love and enjoyment of the Spirit of God is going to be deepened from this book. Look at verses 41-44 and we see six things that the Spirit does.

### A. **He confirms the Word.**

Mary believed, but she did not believe perfectly. Elizabeth believed, but she did not believe perfectly. Both of them, just like you, had moments of uncertainty and we know specifically on Mary’s part, there would be times of misunderstanding. One of the ministries of the Spirit of God is to confirm the Word in our hearts, which of course, gives us certainty. So, Mary, in response to the word from God that tells her that Elizabeth is pregnant, goes to visit Elizabeth and when she enters the house and greets Elizabeth, the baby John leaps in Elizabeth’s womb. This is amazing!

The text clearly gives us the impression that Mary is already pregnant. (explain) Therefore, John is already making an initial response to the presence of Jesus. One thing is abundantly obvious from this text and that is, life clearly begins at conception. We are right to insist on this, embrace this and seek to champion the cause of the unborn. That is not the main point of this text, but it is clearly a point that should not be missed. And, not every child born is John the

Baptist or Jesus, but still, we should note that God knows and is involved in the lives of unborn children.

### **B. He relates us together.**

When Mary arrives at Zechariah and Elizabeth's house, the meeting and greeting is so much more than normal. John leaps in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, that is, she is so strongly influenced by the Spirit, that she speaks things that she had not known or planned to say. More on that in a second, but I don't want to gloss over the sweet meeting that this is, because this is clearly one of the great ministries of the Spirit. He causes us to be connected with each other on a level that is beautiful and promising. Think about this. When God made us in his image, he made us (man and woman) to be relational beings. We are not complete without others. God made us that way because God is a triune God. He is not a one-person God, but triune: Father, Son and Spirit. We were designed for satisfaction and joy by being in relationship with God and each other. Heaven is glorious because God is there and those who love God are there. Our lives now are intended to be a preview of that. But, of course, we tend to drive each other crazy, and I don't have to give you examples because you just got a bunch from spending Thanksgiving with your family. But, the Spirit of God changes that. He enables us to relate together in a way that is so much deeper than any of the surface connections that we may have in this world. That is why a church is not a Bible Conference center, a chapel service, a seminar or an entertainment event. We are a community of believers who are a flock, a temple, a body and a household (family). The Spirit is our glue. He relates us together and he relates us together in a way that he causes us to bless each other.

### **C. He causes us to bless each other.**

Elizabeth is speaking what the Spirit is causing her to say and she is blessing Mary. Elizabeth is not threatened by Mary, but blesses her. Elizabeth's son is the forerunner of Mary's son. Elizabeth's son has a role to play, but Mary's son is the King and Elizabeth is excited about that. That does not bother her in the least. In fact, she declares that Mary is blessed and the fruit of her womb is blessed. Elizabeth is thrilled for Mary and her response to Mary previews what her son, John will say about Jesus years later. "He must increase and I must decrease." What enables Elizabeth to respond like this and bless Mary so sincerely from her heart? It is the Spirit of God. The Spirit really enables us to live for the joy and advancement of others.

I know that I rail on this, possible a little too much, but I really think that our social media culture has contributed so much toxic air to what we breathe that we have no idea how deeply we are affected by it. We tend to find our happiness based on how many views, likes and shares we get to things we post. Therefore, we tend to believe that our happiness is hitched to the wagon of how much we are noticed. The air that we breathe is the air of self-view (selfies). Elizabeth is pregnant. She is finally, pregnant. In her own words, she said that the Lord has done this for me and has taken away my reproach among people, and now comes along her much younger cousin who is going to completely steal the show and Elizabeth is excited about that! She blesses Mary because Elizabeth knows that life is not about her, it is about God and the Son

of God. This is what the Spirit of God does in the lives of believers. He gives us love for others that is otherworldly, joy that is safe because it is in Jesus, peace that passes understanding because we know our God reigns, patience because we know God will do all things in his time and will do them well, kindness because the Spirit grows the heart of Jesus in us, goodness because God is good, faithfulness because God keeps his promises, gentle because we don't have to get angry in order to accomplish, good and self-control because we trust our very selves into the hands of our good and great God.

#### **D. He causes us to love and bless Jesus.**

Elizabeth declares, "blessed is the fruit of your womb." What is the role and ministry of the Spirit? He draws attention to Jesus. He wants you to love and trust Jesus because Jesus is the only One who can save you. (gospel) So, the evidence of the genuine work of the Spirit is going to be seen in one who consistently points to, loves and blesses Jesus. There are a lot of people who use "the gifts of the Spirit" to make much of themselves and use "miracles" to draw attention to themselves. That is the sign of a false prophet. The Spirit does not bless self-glory, but self-abasement. This is why Elizabeth finds her happiness in the blessing of Mary. Now look at v.43.

#### **E. He enables us to call Jesus, Lord.**

Do you see what Elizabeth called Mary? She calls her, the mother of my Lord. That is the first time in the NT that Jesus is called Lord. 1 Cor. 12.3b says that no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit." Verse 43 is so beautiful and humble. Mary, you have blessed me. I am overwhelmed with the thought that the mother of my Lord would make this trip all the way to see me and be with me. (Mary ends up staying with her for 3 months, possibly until or shortly after the birth of John.) Elizabeth's understanding of who Jesus is, is the direct result of the ministry of the Spirit of God in her life.

That is what the Spirit does. He points us to Jesus so that we understand the truth about him. He opens our eyes to Jesus so that we understand the personal significance of the truth about him and then the Spirit gives us faith. The Spirit causes us to be born again. Just as the Spirit caused life in Mary, he causes spiritual life in us. Peter said, "According to his great mercy he caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...." (1 Peter 1.3) The Spirit is the ultimate driving force of our faith in Christ, so of course no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Spirit because no one believes in Jesus except by the Spirit. And the Spirit LOVES to do this. The Spirit loves to get our attention off of things that do not matter and will not work and will not save and will not satisfy and cause us to trust in the One who does. The Spirit is the ultimate marriage arranger and knows that everyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved and will be full of joy and satisfied forever. That is how John responded even in Elizabeth's womb.

#### **F. He is the source of joy.**

John leaped for joy because Mary was there and Jesus was in Mary. The Spirit made that connection. And he still does. He helps you see that your eternal joy is Christ. Therefore,

### 3. **The blessing of belief.** (45)

Elizabeth believed God's Word. Mary believed God's Word. Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth so Mary went to see her because it would be a blessing and a gift to each other, and oh how it was. When you look at what Elizabeth says here in v.45, she pronouncing how delighted, how favored, how settled, peaceful, content, safe is the person who believes in the promises that God has made and lives confident in the fact that he will keep his promises. At the same time, Elizabeth is saying this to Mary. She is blessing Mary. Mary, you have believed God's Word. Mary, you are blessed because you have believed God's Word.

There are going to be an incredible amount of pressure that Mary is going to experience. She needs this from Elizabeth. She needs the encouragement and the reminder that what she believes is right and it is worth believing. This is her role and mission and it is worth fulfilling.

So, in conclusion, I want to ask you two questions: Is this true of you? Do you believe in your heart of hearts the promises of God? Can others say this of you? Is this your conviction? And 2) Are there people in your life that you can say this about? Have you blessed them and encouraged them by telling them that?

Dad story

Those who believe God's Word are blessed, for they have eyes to see and hearts that trust. (45)

Conclusion:

Where was the Declaration of Independence drawn up and signed? Where was the Constitution written? History happened in those places that changed the world. Here is a meeting that is incredible in its impact. But who would believe? Who knew? 2 women did.