Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Mary and Elizabeth: Confirming Angelic Prophecy
Scripture: Luke 1:39-45
Code: 42-13

We return in our study of God's Word this morning to Luke chapter 1, this great chapter that launches the story of the coming of Christ, the Savior of the world. We have gone through two great narratives in the first 38 verses of Luke 1. The first narrative is the story of the miraculous conception of John the Baptist in the womb of Elizabeth. The second story is the story of the miraculous conception of Jesus the Son of God in the womb of Mary.

Luke begins his gospel record with the story of two conception miracles...two women who by all human standards could never have children. Elizabeth who was barren was somewhere in her sixties or seventies or eighties, had never been able to have children at all, was past child-bearing capability and yet with her husband Zacharias, who also was past that capability, conceived and carried in her womb the great prophet John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. The second narrative is about a girl, Mary, a virgin, 13 years of age or so who became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of God creating life in her womb without a man involved at all.

Two pregnant women, two miracle mothers. One is old, married for many years, childless and barren. The other is young, having never been married and a virgin. One in her seventies or so, one in her early teens. Interestingly enough they were relatives. They had both been chosen by God to be the human instruments for the birth of two very, very unusual men...John the Baptist the greatest prophet who ever lived up until his time, and Jesus Christ, Son of Man, Son of God, Savior of the world.

These two conception miracles, these two miracles in the womb of two women launch the whole series of messianic miracles. The whole miraculous coming of Christ begins with these two conception miracles. And at that point God has injected Himself miraculously into the otherwise non-miraculous source of life. As I told you before, there hasn't been a miracle in over 400 years, there hasn't been a series of miracles in at least 500 years. Nobody has heard from an angel, or even from God in well over 400 years. Miracles didn't happen. God didn't speak. Angels didn't show up until now. And it all begins with these two amazing conceptions...Elizabeth, chosen to be the mother of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Messiah, and Mary, chosen to be the mother of Messiah, the Son of God.

In both cases the angel Gabriel came to make the announcement. In the first case, the angel Gabriel came to Zacharias who was the father of John the Baptist, and Zacharias received the message from

Gabriel that he and his wife, Elizabeth, together would conceive and have a son who would be the greatest prophet, the forerunner of Messiah. Gabriel then came later to a virgin, to Mary, and gave her the message that we saw in verses 26 to 33, that she without a man would be given a child who would be the Son of God. So all of a sudden redemptive history reaches its great high point.

Now up until now these two narratives, though contained in the first 38 verses of this chapter, have been separate. Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judah, that would be around Jerusalem in the south of Israel. Mary lived in Nazareth, a small town in the Galilee, as its known, and that is in the north of Israel, separated by 75 or 80 miles or so. There are incredible similarities in the accounts that are unmistakable.

For example, if you compare the account in verses 5 to 23 with Zacharias and Elizabeth and Gabriel, and you compare the account with Gabriel and Mary in 26 to 38, you see the same flow. They run as parallel accounts. They share the same kind of progression. They start with an introduction of the parents, or parent. Secondly, there is some specification of the obstacles to child bearing, either the barrenness of Elizabeth or the virginity of Mary. Thirdly there is the appearance of Gabriel. Fourthly there is the immediate reaction to the appearance of Gabriel. Then there is the statement by Gabriel in both cases, "Do not be afraid," and he addresses either Zacharias or Mary. And then there is the promise of a son. And then there is a description of the son. And then there is an objection, in the case of Zacharias, he didn't believe it, in the case of Mary, she couldn't understand how it could happen. Then there is a sign to show that it will happen. And then there is the departure of Gabriel. And both accounts run those same points in the same sequence in the same progression.

If you read the two accounts, for example, you will read in the first account of Gabriel's conversation with Zacharias about the birth of John the Baptist, you will read that he was troubled. It also tells us about Mary, that she was troubled. In the account with Gabriel and Zacharias, the angel said to him...in the account to Mary, the angel said to her... To Zacharias he said, "Do not be afraid." To Mary he said, "Do not be afraid." To Zacharias he said, "your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son." To Mary he said, "You'll bear a son." To Zacharias he said, "You will name him John." And to Mary, "You will name Him Jesus." To Zacharias, "He will be great." To Mary, "He will be great." Zacharias responded and said to the angel, and later on in verse 24 Mary responded and said to the angel. And so it went...all the way down they are parallel almost in every regard. Two completely separate incidents, separated by a number of months and yet with the same basic sequence. And Luke runs them parallel, as it were, in his account. Two women separated by many years, separated by many miles, separated by circumstances meet in the text before us. This is a wonderful text for here these two who have not known about their personal visitations by Gabriel, they've only known their own and not the other's, come together and share these parallel experiences.

Look at verse 39. "Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country to a city of Judah and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it came about that when

Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed be among women are you and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what has been spoken to her by the Lord.'"

Now here we have Mary and Elizabeth getting together. That obviously poses the question, what's the point of the meeting? What's the purpose of it? Why was Mary so eager and so hasty in wanting to get to the south and visit with her old relative Elizabeth? What does this all mean? And what does it mean when the baby leaps in the womb? And what is this prophecy that Elizabeth gives? What is the point of all of this?

Well, if you stop and think about it you can really begin to understand why Mary wanted at the sort of slight prompting of the angel Gabriel, she wanted to go and meet with Elizabeth as soon as she could. I mean, she had just been told something that was absolutely humanly impossible and frankly unimaginable, that she was going to be the mother of Messiah. She was going to be the mother of the Son of God. She was going to bear a holy offspring that would be conceived in her by God the Most High Himself. And all of this while being a virgin. She had been chosen by God to be the mother of Messiah. Messiah would be a holy offspring. All of this would happen without a man's involvement. It would all be done by God. This was...this was just mind boggling, just more than any human could ever understand or comprehend. No woman who ever lived had heard such a word...beyond understanding, beyond comprehension. And besides, miracles didn't happen and God didn't speak and angels just didn't show up in visible fashion.

Well the angel knew that this was a startling, devastating bit of information. And so he gave her a sign, verse 36, "Behold, your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month for nothing will be impossible with God."

There weren't miracles. There weren't conception miracles. Mary believed the angel. She had faith. Her faith had a measure of strength, but it was still really beyond comprehension. It takes little imagination to understand that she would need to bolster that strength that miracles do happen, that..that conception miracles do happen and this one was going to happen in her body without her even knowing it miraculously. There wouldn't be any day or any point in time, any personal, physical experience. This would happen by the miracle of God. How would her mortal flesh withstand the emotional and spiritual strain of carrying the Son of God, the Messiah? This ordinary girl of flesh and blood, this ordinary girl who knew her own sinfulness and her own weaknesses, how could she endure the emotional strain of the incalculable honor of having the Son of God in her womb? And could she really be sure upon all examination that this in fact was reality? It might not begin to evidence itself in her body for a period of time, but she couldn't wait for that and so in a hurry she

wants to go and see Elizabeth because she wants to be sure that in fact God can do, is doing, has done conception miracles and Elizabeth was the living proof of that.

There was one person who would be verification for her that God was able to do a conception miracle, and that one person was Elizabeth. So it tells us in verse 39 she arose and went with haste to the hill country of Judah and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

Now this is the first thing I want to say about this. All of this is about confirmation. And this first aspect of confirmation I like to call personal confirmation...personal confirmation. The whole coming together of Mary and Elizabeth was to confirm to Mary the truth of the angel's words. It was really very hard to believe. It was not only hard for Mary to believe, but it was harder for anybody else to believe. I'll say more about that in a minute.

Mary wanted her faith strengthened. It wasn't that she didn't have any faith, it was just that this was a stretch by all imagination. And so she wanted to be strong in her faith and Elizabeth could provide confirmation personally for her.

So it says in verse 39, she launches in to what really is the pursuit of personal confirmation. That is coming from a person, coming from Elizabeth. Verse 39 begins, "Now at this time," we'll stop there for a moment. The time is clear, at the time that Gabriel visited her, that very time. The time of the visit Gabriel she made haste, she went in a big hurry, promptly on hearing that Elizabeth, her old relative, was pregnant and she knew a woman her age and a woman who had been barren all her life could not by any human means be pregnant. When she heard that she was pregnant in verse 36 she was already six months pregnant so that it would be evident that she was in fact pregnant. She wasted no time in making the trip.

As I said, verse 36 indicates Elizabeth was already six months pregnant. Now follow this. Go down to verse 56, it says in verse 56, "Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then returned to her home." So she went there when she was six months pregnant. She left when she was nine months pregnant. Apparently just before the birth of John. Verse 57, "Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth and she brought forth a son." So she went when she was six months pregnant. She left just before the birth of John three months later. Therefore she couldn't have wasted any time. If she was going to go there, stay three months and get home before the child was born, she had to have gotten there in the sixth month which means she had to have gone immediately. She arose and went with haste.

There is no report here, by the way, of Mary's conception. We must assume that it had already happened, the miracle had already taken place. Nothing more is said then what is said in verse 35, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." It never tells us at what day or what hour or

what moment. There's no fanfare. There's no nothing but that miracle must have happened. Mary then not being able to feel any of that at that particular point perhaps initially may begin to feel some evidences of it, but there's not enough time to really know that. She goes, I think, within days eager to respond to the angel's wonderful message. It's about 75-85 miles, maybe more, from Nazareth to the southern Judea hillside region. It would take her about three or four days to get there.

Frankly it's very unusual for a young girl to make such a journey, young girls of her age were the protection of their...the protection of their life was really in the care of their father and their mother. They were kept in the home where they could be secluded and protected. And that was pretty typical for her to just go tramping off down to the south of the country was a very unusual thing to do. It doesn't tell us who went with her. We can assume perhaps somebody went along. It might even be that she went by herself. We don't know any of those kinds of details.

Some have suggested that she went to hide her pregnancy. Well that soon she wouldn't have anything to hide. Others said she went to avoid the wrath of Joseph. At that point there's no reason to assume Joseph knew anything because Mary, you remember, had left that with the Lord and it was an angel who later appeared to Joseph in a dream and explained to him what had happened. So she didn't go to hide her pregnancy which wouldn't have been visible then. She didn't go to run from Joseph who perhaps didn't even know about it at that particular time. She went because she wanted to see Elizabeth for personal confirmation that in fact God could do conception miracles and that would be evident in the case of Elizabeth if in fact what the angel said was true and she was with child.

She went to the hill country, that's right around the facility of Jerusalem. If you've ever been to Jerusalem you can understand why it's called the hill country. To a city, probably better a village or a small town of Judah, we don't know which one. There is a traditional site that came from the sixth century that may not be accurate that puts it about five miles from Jerusalem. But this was the place where the priest, Zacharias, and his wife, Elizabeth, lived and where he carried on his normal priestly function through the year, except for the two weeks that he was serving in the temple.

So she went there. It says in verse 40 she went into the house of Zacharias and she greeted Elizabeth. Now I've got to stop on the word "greet" here because it's used several times. You see it again in verse 41, it says "Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting," you see it again in verse 44, "At the sound of your greeting." And now a greeting in the ancient near east was not "Hi, how are you?" It was not something brief. It was not some kind of simple formula. What was involved in a greeting was a lengthy dialogue. It was sort of a...sort of a ceremonial social occasion, the significance of which lay in the content of the conversation. I'll give you an illustration of it. There might be a number of them that you could use, but back in 18 of Exodus it says in verse 7, "Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and he bowed down and kissed him and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent." Now that is a classic ancient near eastern greeting. There's an embrace, a physical

expression of affection and then in the tent they go to talk about how life is with both of them. That's exactly what we can assume occurred upon Mary's arrival when it says "she greeted Elizabeth." She went in and a typical traditional greeting began to take place which would be hours of conversation. And my, they had a lot to talk about...an awful lot to talk about.

Surely Elizabeth must have disclosed to Mary how she became pregnant. How Zacharias had been serving at the temple then the angel Gabriel had appeared to him while he was in the altar of incense and he came out with this incredible message that they were going to have a child and the child would be great in the sight of the Lord and he would drink neither wine nor liquor and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. And he would be the forerunner of the Messiah and he would turn many to righteousness. And all of that that was prophesied in verses 13 to 17 of chapter 1 and how that it was not long after that Zacharias had come home and they had come together that she was pregnant. She stayed secluded for five months until it began to show that so that people would know when she claimed to be pregnant she wasn't a fool. Then she told the wonderful story about the sequence of the conversation with Gabriel and went through the whole account as it had been recorded by Luke. Upon which Mary would have told her story which paralleled as we saw in so many ways how that Gabriel had come to her in her home in Nazareth and had told her that she was going to be the mother of the Son of God and that this was going to occur without a man and God was going to plant that child in her womb. He was going to create that child apart from normal human conception. And they would have discussed those stories. The parallels would have been very wonderful for them to recite. And that was important to God so that there would be so many parallels it would be crystal clear that every thing Mary heard sounded just like what Zacharias and Elizabeth heard. And since that which was promised to Elizabeth had come to pass, that which was promised to Mary would also come to pass. The patterns were identical.

So they greeted themselves in that sense. And that becomes the personal confirmation. Elizabeth just sitting there dialoguing, going over the account and paralleling it with Mary's account and being six months pregnant provides personal confirmation. Yes God can do conception miracles, here is personal confirmation of it right here in this person sitting opposite me. Just seeing Elizabeth and understanding her condition as an old woman past child-bearing capacity, married to an old man in the same predicament would be the reality of the fact that God had done a miracle. And when you throw Gabriel into the mix and the conversation is almost identical, it's a great confirmation.

Now there's something else here too that you need to understand. I think Mary went for the confirmation but I also think she went to see Elizabeth because she knew only Elizabeth would believe her. I mean, let's try to put it in a normal context. Your 13-year-old daughter comes in and say, "I'm pregnant." And you say, "What?" And she says, "An angel came to me and told me that I have been impregnated by God and I'm going to be the mother of the Savior of the world." "Really?"

Sounds like something a teenager would come up with, doesn't it? What in the world kind of wild story...at least try to find something rational. I mean, there would be only...there would be only the slightest glimmer of hope that anybody would believe that. Even Joseph who knew Mary well made the natural assumption when he found out she was with child, he assumed that she had violated her betrothal vows to him and committed sin. And he says, "I'm either going to have to stone her or divorce her." And he loved her and he knew her and he knew the family and he must have known something about her character and it must have seemed out of character for her to have done some sin like that, but there wasn't any other explanation. Frankly there was only one woman on the earth who would buy Mary's story. Who was it? Elizabeth. Only one place she could go and tell this tale.

The text doesn't say anything about what she may or may not have said to her family or to Joseph or anybody else. It just says she was out of there to Elizabeth, the only person who would have any rational reason to believe that what she was saying was in fact true. Telling Elizabeth first made sense.

Then Elizabeth could be support for her when she told everybody else. Because Elizabeth was living, personal confirmation that God was doing conception miracles. You tell anybody else and they're going to think Mary's made up this preposterous story about Gabriel and being the mother of the Son of God, nobody would believe that. But Elizabeth would believe it. And the parallels were really startling.

So, Mary and Elizabeth come together to provide for Mary personal confirmation. It must have been a great moment for her when she was confirmed by the personal encounter with Elizabeth, that in fact God can do conception miracles. And that what Gabriel said to Elizabeth came true, therefore what Gabriel said to Mary could be trusted. Tremendous confirmation.

Secondly, in addition to personal confirmation was physical confirmation...physical confirmation. Something happened physically that confirmed that Mary was going to be the mother of a holy offspring. Something physical happened to confirm that Mary was bearing in her body the Son of God. What was it? Verse 41, "And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, in the midst of this conversation when this is going on and Elizabeth is hearing that Mary is going to be the mother of the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of God, the baby leaped in her womb." Now stop right there.

Now, folks, I really can't speculate a lot about this because this is all it says. And I'm not here to describe the actual pathology of this. I'm not here to try to describe for you something clinical. All I can tell you is that when Mary was telling the story to Elizabeth about the fact that the Spirit of God was going to plant the Messiah in her womb, the baby leaped. The same term is used in Psalm, I think it's Psalm 114:4 translated in the Septuagint form and it's the word "skipped." Now the movement of a baby in a womb is not abnormal. In fact, I think that's probably one of the pleasures of

child bearing is to feel that life. And as the child gets older and older, the more that life you feel. And, you know, all of us who are sort of by-standing fathers, you know, put our hands on the womb and we feel the little kicking and moving of that infant. That's an exhilarating and wonderful thing because it's the prospect of life that's indicated by that.

That's normal, I mean, that happens. But I don't think that's coincidental here. After all, that little fetus is a prophet...now stay with me...not only is that a prophet but that's not just a prophet that's the greatest prophet that ever lived. Not only that, that little prophet is John the Baptist and his responsibility is to be the forerunner of...whom?...Messiah. Folks, this is his first announcement. It's a silent prophecy.

You say, "What are you talking about?" Well, back in verse 15 of chapter 1 it says about John the Baptist, verse 15, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. Did you get that? Now why would you do that? Why would it...why fill him with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb? There wouldn't be any purpose in filling him, it might be a great purpose in filling his mother. But why would you fill him? Well...why would God's Holy Spirit fill that little fetus unless God's Holy Spirit wanted to achieve something supernatural through him, right? When we think about the filling of the Holy Spirit we think about obeying the Word and following the will of the Holy Spirit and getting led by the Holy Spirit. And that's good. The New Testament unfolds that, we understand that. But there's an aspect of the filling of the Holy Spirit that's connected to prophecy, and we'll see more about that later. It's connected to prophecy. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke the Word of God. That's a pretty typical Old Testament scenario. That little fetus in the womb was filled with the Holy Spirit even while in the womb because it was going to do something important to the purposes of God in a supernatural way.

This is not completely without precedent. If you go back to Genesis 25, do you remember a mother by the name of Rebekah? And Rebekah had in her womb two boys, remember that? Remember their names? Jacob and Esau. And God gave prophecies through those two little unborn boys in verse 22 of Genesis 25. The children, it says in verse 21, she conceived, Rebekah conceived, Isaac and Rebekah, "The children struggled together within her." Now it's one thing for two brothers to fight when they're born, these guys started in the womb. And she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to the Lord and she said, "Lord, You know, why is all this going on inside of me?" And He said, "It's prophetic." He said to her, "Two nations are in your womb." That's right. Jacob was the nation Israel, and Esau the Arab world. "Two nations in your womb. Two people shall be separated from your body, one people will be stronger than the other. The older shall serve the younger." There's conflict going on in your womb that is prophetic of conflict that's going to go on when those two children are born, that conflict is still going on today as we speak between Israel and the Arab world, between Jacob and Esau.

So, God when He wants to can send a prophetic message through something physical occurring in a woman's womb. It's a very unusual thing. That's the only Old Testament occasion of such and this is the only New Testament occasion of such. But after all, folks, there isn't any human explanation of this. This is a miraculous time, isn't it? This is a miraculous set of conceptions here. We would expect miraculous things to be going on as God is moving toward the arrival of the Savior of the world, the Messiah. Movements of a fetus are normal and common, but this is not one of those...this is not coincidental, we know that because of verse 44, Elizabeth gets a message from God. "Behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb...to reposition itself." Is that what it said? It doesn't say that. The baby was not motivated by anything other than...what?...joy...joy. Elizabeth interprets the child's movements.

Now I want to tell you, John the Baptist was really a true prophet. If he couldn't speak, he just jumped. And that's all he could do. He could only leap. He could only jump with divinely inspired delight. His mother had to speak under the inspiration of God to interpret that. So in a physical way John the Baptist while still in the womb gave his approval to the birth of the Messiah...isn't that great? That was not just the normal course of things, that was a word from God through the physical realm.

In John 3:29 John the Baptist is talking and he's talking about Christ and he says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." Christ is the bridegroom. "But the friend of the bridegroom," that was him, he was the friend of the bridegroom who took the bridegroom and gave him to the bride, John says, "The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full." If there was anything that characterized John, it was joy, joy, joy, joy. Why? Because the bridegroom had come, the Messiah had arrived. And that joy started prompted by God's Holy Spirit when he was still in the womb. It set the tone for his ministry.

Now, John the Baptist at the time was also the smallest prophet who ever lived. Somewhere between nine and ten inches high. He was the lightest prophet who ever lived. He was one and a half pounds around. And he was the strangest looking prophet because he had transparent skin...although all of his physical parts had formed, that little life, that little life of a prophet, the greatest prophet who ever lived, was used by God through the power of the Holy Spirit to indicate delight at the fact that the Messiah had been conceived in Mary. God literally gave physical confirmation to Mary through the movement of that child interpreted by Elizabeth.

Mary needs to know. Now she has personal confirmation that God does conception miracles and that what Gabriel says is true, that through the testimony of Elizabeth. Now she has physical confirmation that God can work in the womb because she sees a reaction in the womb that is interpreted to her as the movement of God's Holy Spirit upon that fetus to produce the delight that produces the movement.

Now don't ask me for anymore than that, folks. That took me a whole day just to figure that much out. There's one other point of confirmation, personal, physical and then prophetic...prophetic.

Here is confirmation that comes in a prophetic way. A revelation from God through words. Up to this point it was through a person, Elizabeth, through physical, the movement of the child, now comes a direct word from the Lord. Look at the end of verse 41. "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Now we're getting used to seeing this "being filled with the Holy Spirit." It happened to John when he was in the womb and now here is evidence of it when he moved with delight. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. And it says, "Immediately...verse 42...she cried out with a loud voice and said."

Now again I say to you, folks, this idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit is very often connected to speaking a message from God. Second Samuel 23:2 would be one of many illustrations in the Old Testament. "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me and His word was on my tongue." The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me and HIs word was on my tongue. Even those who wrote scripture, according to Peter's testimony, 2 Peter 1, "Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit." "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God," the breath of God. So we know that God fills certain people to produce the revelation that He desires to be given.

In...look at verse 67, for example. Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth, had a similar experience. Verse 67, his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying. This is a rather typical scenario. Somebody is filled with the Holy Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit filling simply means total control. If something is filled with the Holy Spirit, nothing else is there, it's completely filled with the Holy Spirit, which means the Spirit of God is in control. And that results in revelation being given...the Spirit filling, and then the revelation.

Go later into the account of Luke 2. Jesus has been born by now and His parents take Him to the temple for the ceremony, the custom of the law. And they run into a man there by the name of Simeon, verse 25, who is a righteous man. Simeon, verse 27, "Came in the Spirit into the temple." Now here again the Spirit of God comes upon Simeon. So he comes in, verse 28 he takes this little baby Jesus in his arms, he blesses God and said...and out of his mouth comes a revelation from heaven. He was in the Spirit when it happened.

So the idea of being filled with the Spirit in the case of Elizabeth, in the case of Zacharias, in the case of Simeon is to indicate that what they spoke was divine revelation. It's a familiar Old Testament indication.

So, back to chapter 1 and verse 42. Elizabeth, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God comes right in and takes control, "She cried out with a loud voice..." Now probably she didn't

usually talk like this. Certainly wouldn't do any good in the case of her husband since he was stone deaf because he had been made deaf, you remember, by God for not believing Gabriel's message. God struck him with deafness so it wouldn't have mattered how loud she shouted, she wasn't trying to reach his ears. She was shouting for two reasons, I think...with enthusiasm over this incredible truth that was being placed in her mind and poured through her, and also, I think, to emphasize the authority of it. She literally shouted, in the Greek...she shouted this glorious prophetic confirmation. The word "loud," by the way, some time look up loud in your concordance and sort of trace it around and you'll see how many times it's associated with divine revelation. It kind of conveys the idea that what God wants to say He wants to make sure we hear. And so it said "loudly." And so she opens up her mouth and out comes this revelation. It's really a hymn of praise. It's the first of five of them. Elizabeth gives one and then in verse 46 Mary gives one. Then in verse 67 Zacharias gives one. Then over in chapter 2 the angels give one. And then finally Simeon gives the fifth. There are five hymns of praise all around the conception of the Messiah in the womb of Mary, marvelous hymns of praise. And we'll look at them all as we look through this section of Luke.

But look at her hymn starting in verse 42. "She cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed among women are you and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.'"

That's it. That just came out of her loudly. And it's a hymn of blessing, it's a hymn of praise. It pronounces blessing on Mary. It pronounces blessing on the child of Mary. It pronounces blessing on Elizabeth. And then it pronounces blessing in the end on everybody who believes God's Word. It just...it just blesses in every direction.

First of all, "Blessed are you among women." That's a simple Hebrew construction that means you're the most blessed of all women. You're the most blessed of all women. Why? Well in the Hebrew culture, in the Jewish world a woman gained her greatest stature on the basis of her children. That was it. A woman's greatest was tied to the greatness of the children she bore. Over in the eleventh chapter of Luke this comes up again. Jesus is speaking, verse 27, "It came about while He said these things one of the women in the crowd raised her voice." Some woman in the crowd yelled at Him and said, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed." That was a typical Jewish way to honor a mother because you saw the greatness of her child. And so Elizabeth is saying...You are the most blessed because you have the greatest child.

There's a humility there, isn't there, because Elizabeth had just been told that her son would be great too, but not that great. Her son would be the forerunner of the Messiah but Mary's son would be the Messiah. Elizabeth acknowledges the superiority of her young relative's privilege. She acknowledges that Mary is even a greater beneficiary of God's goodness and she is going to have a

greater calling and a greater privilege and a greater child. And, you know, that sort of went against the grain of normal traditional perspectives, sort of the reversal of the normal social convention. I mean, the older is less than the younger, and the older gives greater honor to the younger. And Mary's privilege is greater than Elizabeth's as Jesus is greater than John. But Mary is the truly blessed. And Elizabeth knows it. And Elizabeth is a righteous woman who is equally thrilled at the prospect not only of bearing the forerunner of Messiah, but of the Messiah coming whom she, Elizabeth, acknowledges in verse 43 as "my Lord." One thing to bear a prophet, it's something else to bear the Lord.

Blessed are you, Mary, above all other woman, you have been chosen to carry the Savior of the world and in verse 42, also, "Blessed is the fruit of your womb," blessed is that child. You are blessed, He is even more blessed. The Messiah, the Savior of the world, the most blessed child ever born, the One who will receive all of heaven's blessing unmixed, unmitigated, the One who will be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, the One who will be perfect, the One who will be sinless, the One who will inherit all that the Father possesses, the One who will be given a redeemed humanity to praise and glorify and serve Him forever, the One who will be the object of eternal praise in glory, this is the most blessed. You are blessed and your child is blessed. A child...literally it says...the child you will bore, it's translated the fruit of your womb, it's actually the child you will bear. It's a familiar Old Testament phrase.

This indicates another confirmation. This is the Spirit of God filling Elizabeth who gets sort of catapulted out of her normal tone of voice and is shouting at the top of her voice this prophetic word from God and this prophetic word from God affirms not only the blessedness of Mary but that she is carrying the blessed Messiah. And further, the child of her womb is defined in verse 43 as "my Lord." This is prophetic confirmation.

Verse 43 is sort of Elizabeth blessing herself. It's sort of awe, she says how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Oh...she's blessed, the child's blessed and I'm blessed. Amazement, humility, awe, she's unworthy and she knows it. That statement, "the mother of my Lord," great statement...great statement. That's prophetic confirmation that in the womb of Mary is the Lord...is Elizabeth's Lord. It isn't some family thing, this is Elizabeth's Lord. And Lord is used to refer to God 25 times in Luke 1 and Luke 2. There can be no other conclusion than that the child is also God. God is called Lord 25 times, it's an exalted divine title. And when we say Jesus is Lord, we're saying Jesus is also God.

Now just a footnote here. It says Elizabeth says in verse 43, she's in awe of this whole thing, "that the mother of my Lord should come to me." Please notice this. Mary is the mother of her Lord, Mary is never in Scripture called the mother of God...never. Nobody is God's mother. God always existed. God was never produced, never conceived, never born, never generated. The eternal God has always existed. God has no mother. When people say, "Mary, mother of God," they're not talking

about the Mary of Scripture. She was the mother of Jesus, the man. She is not the mother of God. Deity is true of Jesus, but it is not confined to Jesus. Mary was the mother of the man Jesus, she is not the mother of God. That is a terrible error. Resident in Mary was a human, physical child who was in His inner person God, who always existed...the eternal God, the Son who had lived from all eternity.

Well, in verse 44, we've already looked at it. This was Elizabeth's explanation and it came from the Lord. "Behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy." God revealed to her that that was not just a normal common motion of the child, but that God the Holy Spirit had moved on that little prophet and made him leap with delight as a physical affirmation that God worked in the womb of Elizabeth and would work in the womb of Mary.

Elizabeth closes after having blessed Mary and blessed Jesus and pronounced a blessing on herself for being the one to whom the mother of the Lord had come, verse 45 is sort of like...it's really sort of like a general beatitude, it just sort of widens everything up. "And blessed is she...anybody...who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." Blessed is she, sure that's Mary, of course, blessed is Mary because she believed. But, you know, it doesn't say "blessed are you, Mary," it just says "blessed is she" and it puts it in the third person. Anybody who believes God fulfills His promises is going to be blessed, right? And so the beatitude starts with Mary, moves to the child, embraces Elizabeth and goes beyond.

You know, Mary is a...a wonderful example for us. She's not the mother of God, she's not the queen of heaven. But she is a model believer and she was blessed not just because of her privilege, not just because she was chosen to bear the Messiah. She was blessed not just because of what God did to her but because of how she responded, she was blessed because she believed. Contrast her with Zacharias...Zacharias heard the message from the angel and did not believe and wasn't blessed, he was...what?...cursed, struck deaf and dumb. And I think, you know, Elizabeth knows that and she may have even been looking at Zacharias when she said this...Blessed is she who believed. I don't know whether he could read lips in this brief six-month period but she may have said, "Blessed is she who believed..." I mean, if you want to be blessed, you believe.

That's...that's, you know...what do you do with Mary? That's what you do with Mary, right there. You don't make Mary the queen of heaven, you don't make her a co-redemptrix with Christ, you don't make her the one responsible for access to Jesus as if she's a mediator. You don't make her the only one who can convince Jesus to answer the penitent's sinner's prayer. You don't make her the mother of God. What you do is you see Mary as someone who is a model of faith. She believed there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord. And because she believed that, she pursued that, she went to see Elizabeth and she got all that confirmation.

What do you want from Mary? Just that, she's not going to hear your prayers. She's never heard anybody's prayers. She's not on that line. Only God hears prayers. She's not up there for that purpose. Mary sets an example for us though, she shows us how believers should respond...when God speaks, you listen, you believe, you obey, then you burst forth, starting in verse 46, in worship. She's a model believer. She heard, she believed, she obeyed, she worshiped. What else can we say? And blessed is anybody, whoever she be, or he be, who does that. She is a wonderful example. She heard the truth from God, she believed it, she obeyed it and she worshiped in response. That's the only Mary that you have any right to make a part of your life, just an example...among many of a faithful believer.

She was confirmed and she must have gone on her way three months later rejoicing. She didn't stay for the birth, apparently. She didn't need to. By then she herself would have been three months pregnant. It was time for her to get back and get on with her own life.

This is how we are to live our lives. We don't get messages like she got, but I'll tell you something, God speaks, doesn't He, in His Word. And the question is...do we, like Mary, believe there will be a fulfillment of what He has said? Do you believe His Word? Obey it? And worship Him for it? That's the issue.

Father, thank You for our time this morning again to focus on this great story, this really rich thrilling account. Thank You for the way in which You have put it in such simple terms, and yet the depth of it we can't even begin to reach. Oh we thank You for the great conception that brought us a sinless Savior. Thank You for this miracle that sets Jesus apart from every person who ever lived. He's not just another prophet, He's not just a good man, He's not just a well-intentioned teacher, He's not just a revolutionary leader, not at all, He is God in human flesh. That's what Gabriel said, that's what Mary believed. That's what Elizabeth confirmed. We thank You for that confirmation. And we trust that we can stand as Mary did, hearing the truth, believing the truth, obeying the truth and worshiping in response to it. We thank You for her example. We thank You that through her You brought a Savior, virgin conceived, virgin born, who gave His life for His people...of whom we have been made a part. We praise You for that...in His name. Amen.

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