

Sermon- Process Brings Peace

Preached at Cloverdale 12/24/23

Luke 1:26-56

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

We see there is a process or prerequisite phase involved in the virgin birth of Christ. Gabriel doesn't appear with his message and greeting until 'after' Joseph and Mary are engaged. In the Jewish marriage process, the engagement or betrothal occurs before the actual marriage. There is a period of time between the engagement and the actual marriage....this is waiting in the gap.

Mary is betrothed to Joseph and as the bride, she is waiting for the return of the groom. Likewise, every true believer must follow the same process. We and the church are the bride of Christ and He is the groom. We are waiting for Christ to return for us as His bride. It is in the middle of this process or during the wait, that Gabriel appears with a word.

Why does Gabriel wait until now to appear? Because it is in line with the process for how Christ will come and always comes.

Notice what the greeting proclaims.

- Rejoice! Why? Because the reason for rejoicing is she had found great favor with God and He is with her. That is a pretty good reason to rejoice.
- How can we be in a position to receive a greeting like this and a reason to praise? Follow the betrothal steps.

²⁹ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

This is to mean she was alarmed. Why is a little old plain person like me getting a visitation like this? How did I gain favor like this, because I didn't see this coming.

³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

What a prophesy and what a plan! The angel tells her the plan and the expected outcome from this situation. God is going to do something on the inside of Mary that will come out of her and have a major impact on the Kingdom of God. Christ is coming out of this. Salvation and dominion is coming behind this. It must be important for Mary to know and understand the purpose of her favor with God.

God is going to use her in a very powerful way to achieve His plan. So, the angel explains her role in the process for the coming of Christ. There is a process involved. In almost everything in life, there is a process or series of sequential steps involved.

Mary is wondering how this can happen when she looks at her current state. She is just a humble nobody. Her current condition and status in the natural seems to make this prophesy and outcome highly unlikely. She doesn't see how she qualifies or how this can happen for her.

³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible."

Next, the angel tells Mary how all this will happen. The angel confirms that in the natural, from Mary's perspective, this is not possible in her current state. But the supernatural power is about to come on her. When the power of the Holy Spirit hits her and takes control.

Overshadow meaning the Holy Spirit will have greater influence and importance than any other aspect of her life. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, what comes out of Mary will be seen as coming from God.

The angel gives further evidence and a testimony. Elizabeth, her cousin is also experiencing a miracle birth. Something unexpected is happening to her. People used to call her barren, people used to say she was past her prime, people used to say she was done, people used to say her best days were behind her. All that is about to change and who they used to call barren is about to be called blessed. She is about to achieve a position of great importance in the Kingdom and plan of God.

For with God nothing "will be" impossible. It was an impossibility with Mary alone, but with God in the middle, what seemed to be impossible is now most probable. God can turn situations around. So, the angel parenthetically is saying if God is doing it for Elizabeth, then He can do it for you.

I just said something. Application for today. If He did it for Mary, can He do it for you?

- After Mary has gone through the betrothal process and is waiting, God sends her a word.
 - If He did it for Mary, He will give you a word too.
- Because of Mary's humility and place in the process, the angel says God favors her.
 - If He was pleased with Mary, He can be well pleased with you.
- While Mary is waiting, the angel tells her she is blessed.
 - If He blessed Mary, He can bless you too.
- Mary is wondering how this is going to happen for her based upon her situation.
 - You might be looking at your current situation and wondering the same thing. How can God turn things around for me like this? How can God use me in His plan?

- If He used Mary, He can use you.
- If He changed Mary, He can change you.
- Mary finds out that she is an important part of God's plan.
 - If He wants to use Mary, than He can use you too.
- Mary finds out that the power of the Holy Spirit is about to work through her and do the impossible in her life.
 - If the Holy Spirit can do the impossible in her life, He can do it for you.
- Mary finds out that someone she knows is already receiving a miracle.
 - If He revealed this to Mary, you better look around, someone you know may be experiencing God at work.
- Somebody who folks used to say is facing a condition that is hopeless, is about to be called fruitful.
 - If He changed what people were saying about Elizabeth, He can change what people will be saying about you.

³⁸Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Because of all of this, Mary believes. Because of the word and the example given, Mary has faith in the process. She trusts in the process and declares whatever God has said about me, let it happen. She has faith in the word. The angel is gone, but Mary still has the word and a promise that the Holy Spirit will be there shortly while she waits.

If He did it for Mary, He can do it for you. The question now is....we know He can, but does He want to do it for you?

The answer is yes! He wants to bless you like this too. It is part of the process! Just follow the steps.

Become engaged to Christ. God wants to bless you like this or He wouldn't have promised you and I the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit operating in Mary, wants to do the same type of transformation in you.

Just wait on God....your change is coming. People will call you blessed and highly favored and somebody will be positively influenced by you because of what God is going to do through your life. You have a Kingdom purpose and your life can be part of His plan.

God wants to use you like this. The process brings peace....so fear not.

Process Brings Peace Part Two (What to do while you wait)

Preached at Cloverdale 12/31/23

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-56

³⁹ Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Background: Last week we looked at the process God used to bring Christ into our lives through the example of Mary and Joseph. There is a plan and process involved and when we understand Mary's story, we better understand the process of Christ's arrival. Mary is waiting and while she is waiting, God does the following:

- Tells her she is blessed and highly favored.
- Reveals the plan He has for the world and her role.
- That Jesus comes out of this situation, God's best.
- That all this will be accomplished through the Holy Spirit....the Spirit will come to her with power.
- Most importantly, as a result of this visit, Mary believes this can happen for her.

The story continues. Mary quickly goes to visit Elizabeth.

All Mary does is speak to Elizabeth and something strange and exciting happens inside her. The sequence is:

- Mary greets her. Mary is powered or under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit works through Mary and jumps onto Elizabeth and she gets filled with what Mary has.
- When Elizabeth gets full of the Holy Spirit, she speaks bold and confirms to Mary what the angel told her earlier....you are blessed and highly favored.
 - Elizabeth is in the same stage....in the gap waiting for God to deliver.
- When the baby inside heard Mary's greeting, he jumped for joy.
- When all this happens, Elizabeth proclaims Mary is blessed because she believed; and because she believes, what God has told her will be fulfilled. It happens through her belief.

What does all this mean to us today?

- While we are waiting for Christ to appear, we should be sharing the good news to others.
- What good news? That Jesus is coming. Share what God has done in you. Give them hope.
- Don't discount the power of the Holy Spirit operating in your life.
 - All she did was speak a word and it gave someone else joy.
- It works both ways. Not only should we encourage others while we wait, God will send others to encourage you to continue to believe and do a good work.
 - Either you are helping someone experience Jesus now or someone is encouraging you to wait for Jesus to what He has promised in your life.
 - Encouraging others helps them to stand on the promises of God.
- Be careful what you say because life and death is in the power of the tongue.

Notice where this happened. It didn't happen in the tabernacle. It happened in a house. Church ain't the only place where you can experience joy in the Holy Spirit.

Summary

I want what Mary and Elizabeth have. They have hope and a word and a promise from God. God has started something miraculous. They are going to play a major role in the coming of Jesus into the world. They encourage and confirm the word of God in each other. The key is the Holy Spirit is at work in both.

I want God to have a plan for my life like this. He does.

I want to be used to bring Christ and salvation into the world. He will.

I want the Holy Spirit to give me the power to speak a word that encourages someone to get happy about Jesus. He has.

I want to God to use me to make a significant difference in the Kingdom. He can.

I want what Mary had in me. She had Christ and the Holy Spirit.

- Christ is the Word, so I need the word. I need the Holy Spirit developing Christ (the Word) in me so that when it is fully developed and understood in me, it comes out looking like Jesus.

What should we be doing while we wait for Jesus to return?

- Letting the Holy Spirit transform us so that others see Jesus.
- Visiting and encouraging others. We may need to go outside of the church to find them.
- Don't isolate ourselves, infect others with the Holy Spirit.

Process Brings Peace Part Three (I Want to Praise Him Like That)

Preached at Cloverdale 1/7/24

Luke 1:46-56

Background: several weeks in this sermon series we have looked at the process God used to bring Christ into our lives through the example of Mary and Joseph. The first week we focused on the role Joseph played. The last two weeks we are focusing on the process and role of Mary. There is a plan and process involved and when we understand Mary's story, we better understand the process of Christ's arrival. Using the ancient Jewish wedding ceremony as a foundation, we see there are two phases in the process involving the arrival of Jesus.

- First there are the steps involved in the engagement phase. Christ always comes first through relationship.
- There is a gap or period of time between the engagement and the actual marriage when the groom returns for his bride.
- In this first chapter of Luke, we find Mary is waiting for Jesus to develop inside of her and then his expected arrival in the form of his birth.
- Like Mary, we too who are in relationship with Jesus are waiting for the return of the King.

This week we will examine what Mary is doing while she waits. This is an important part of the process as we too wait for the arrival of the King again.

I want what Mary has; I want her plan, her promise, her future, Christ developing in me like that.

The Song of Mary

The Magnificat (Latin for "[My soul] magnifies [the Lord]")

⁴⁶ **And Mary said:**

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

Let's stop right there. As the process and plan of God is revealed to Mary, she starts to sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. While she is waiting for the promise of the coming of Jesus, she starts to praise.

This is amazing to me because according to what the angel said and her current condition, she is pregnant. I've never been pregnant so I interviewed some folks and Googled it.

The process involves pain, cramping, discomfort, pressure and stretching. It doesn't sound like a fun time or something to look forward to.



In fact, birth pangs in the Bible represent the coming tribulation. Tough times where terrible events occur on the earth.

The angel just told Mary she is about to go through a rough patch. She is going to experience discomfort and pressure and be stretched. She knows this is coming and yet she can rejoice and magnify the Lord. How can this be?

So I Googled and found a parent Today article that says when you get pregnant your skin clears up, your hair grows thick, you have happy mood swings, and you get that glow.

So, I must assume that when you are in the will of God and you get pregnant, even though you know the tribulation and tough time is coming, you can get happy and rejoice because you know at the end of this process there is something great coming out of this. The tribulation doesn't last forever and the tough time has an expiration date. They must be able to rejoice because they know how it is supposed to end. They know the process and process brings peace.

So, Mary has been told how this will end. She has an expected outcome. She has faith in the process and so she has peace now. She can praise God in advance.

I want what Mary has. Peace in the middle of the trial. A greater understanding of the process and plan of God for my life. I know trials and tribulations are part of the process, but I want to have faith in the process and fully understand the process....because knowing and believing in the process produces peace.

Mary doesn't wait to rejoice and praise God after Jesus comes. She knows the process so she can praise Him in advance. She can praise Him for what He has done, what He has promised, what He is doing right now in her life, and she can praise Him before Jesus arrives.

This is why Mary can sing this hymn:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

**⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.**

**⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy *is* His name.**

**⁵⁰ And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.**

**⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts.**

**⁵² He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones,
And exalted *the* lowly.**

**⁵³ He has filled *the* hungry with good things,
And *the* rich He has sent away empty.**

**⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of *His* mercy,**

**⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever.”**

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

I want to be able to praise God like that.

- Consider how He picked little old me and gave me a promise of a better future.
- After this is over, when I come out of this, somebody is going to change their opinion about me and call me blessed.
- Someone is going to be saved out of my experience.
- Bless the Lord O’ my soul, great things He has done for me.
- Praise Him for His strength and mercy as we can lean on the everlasting arms.
- He is going to turn my situation around from bad to good so others can see His mercy.

How can we praise Him like this with a new song as we wait on Jesus?

Know what He has done for you. Know what He says about you and how He loves you. Know the plans He has for you. Know that this whole process ends in peace. That’s why it is the Gospel of peace.

Let’s begin to praise Him right now.

John 16

¹⁶ “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”

¹⁷ Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?” ¹⁸ They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not [\[d\]](#)know what He is saying.”

¹⁹ Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’?” ²⁰ Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. ²¹ A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.