

CHRISTMAS

"GROWTH"

(Three Characteristics of Mary that Make Strong Believers)

Luke 1:5-13; 26-38



MARY'S THREE TRADEMARKS...

- ◆ A Surrendered Will
- ◆ An Obedient Heart
- ◆ A Grateful Spirit

**"And Mary said, behold, the handmaid of the Lord,
be it unto me according to Thy Word." (Luke 1:38)**

Bill Kirk

Introduction
“CHRISTMAS GROWTH”
(Characteristics of Mary That Make Strong Believers)

Text: Luke 1:5-13, 26-38

Subject: “Voices from the Mother of Jesus” (That Speak to Everyone)

Introduction

- ◆ Luke (Chapter 1) is an amazing revelation.
- ◆ It tells us of the visitation of an angel.
- ◆ How Gabriel visited both Zacharias and Mary.
- ◆ How God had a plan that included ordinary people.
- ◆ How we can be used of the Lord if we are willing to cooperate.

Question: How many of you want to keep growing spiritually in the coming New Year?

Question: How many of you want God to be able to count on you in time of need?

Question: How many of you know that Verse 37 is true: “For with God nothing shall be impossible”?

Question: How many of you are willing to cooperate with God when He speaks to you?

(Mary’s Visitation from God has an awesome setting)
(Vs.26, 27)

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary.”

Question: Who sent the angel to Mary?

Answer: God did.

Question: Where did Gabriel just come from?

Answer: He just came from delivering a message to Zacharias. (V. 11)

Question: What’s the big deal about Gabriel visiting Zacharias before he visited Mary?

Answer: Because God wants to encourage Mary with the first miracle of Elizabeth and Zacharias having a child in old age.

- ◆ God wants to prepare Mary (and you and me).
- ◆ God wants to use Mary (and you and me).
- ◆ God wants to encourage Mary (and you and me).

So God visits Zacharias and Elizabeth with the news,
And teaches us remarkable lessons.

Question: Who were Zacharias and Elizabeth?

Answer: A godly couple with a broken heart.

1. They were spiritual (V. 6)

- ◆ They were righteous before God (they sought the Lord and lived to please Him).
- ◆ They were obedient before God (they walked in submission to His will).
- ◆ They were “blameless” (which means that they were not perfect, but they lived in such a way that no one could charge them with open sin).

2. They were broken hearted (V. 7) Why?

- ◆ They were childless (which was like a curse in that day). In fact, a Jew whose wife could not bear children was thought to be cut off from God.
- ◆ They were elderly (and all hope of having children was behind them).

3. **They were faithful (V. 8-10)**

Question: What is Zacharias doing in V. 8?

Answer: He is being faithful to God in his ministry.

- ◆ He's not pouting and sour and grumbling.
- ◆ He's not mad at God because of unanswered prayer.
- ◆ He's not "holding out" or "on strike" until God does what he wants.

Instead, he's serving God.

- ◆ He was a priest and served in the temple.
- ◆ He was burning incense upon the altar, which symbolized the sacrifices and prayers were being received by God.
- ◆ He was faithful in his worship and service, despite the problems of his age and his unfulfilled expectations of no children.

4. **They were rewarded (Vs. 11-13)**

Question: What's the reward?

Answer: Prayers answered by God.

Question: What was Zacharias doing?

Answer: (V. 10) He was praying as any other day.

Question: What's the big deal of V. 11?

Answer: The angel of the Lord appeared, standing (notice) "on the right side of the altar of incense."

In Other Words

- ◆ Zacharias was pouring out his heart to God.
- ◆ Zacharias had been praying for years and years.
- ◆ Zacharias had refused to resent God's wisdom.
- ◆ Zacharias stayed sweet regardless of the wait.
- ◆ And, it was while he was praying that God met the need and sent the answer.

Does God find you here today like Zacharias and Elizabeth?

In Other Words

1. **Are you a man or woman that is spiritual?**

- ◆ Are you walking righteous? Obedient and blameless before God?
- ◆ Is Jesus Lord in every area of your life?

2. **Are you broken hearted?**

- ◆ Have you been saddened because of some unfulfilled expectation?
- ◆ Have things not worked out as you had planned (or God's timing differs from yours?)
- ◆ An unanswered prayer, a great disappointment, unfulfilled expectations?

3. **Are you faithful in your service?**

- ◆ Even though you've been disappointed, do you serve?
- ◆ You're not "holding out", on strike or mad at God, no grumbles or murmurs?
- ◆ No resentments toward God or His plans for you individually?

4. Are you praying?

- ◆ Ready for the Lord to send the answer at the incense altar of prayer?
- ◆ Willing to pray and pray; knowing God is working even when you cannot see Him?
- ◆ Are you willing to pray and seek the Lord, based on God's credibility instead of your visibility?

Now, an encouraging word.

Question: Why are Zacharias and Elizabeth in Luke Chapter 1?

Question: Why did God record their miracle of conception of John the Baptist?

Question: Why did God wait so many years to answer their prayer?

Question: Why open Elizabeth's womb at the same time her cousin Mary would conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit?

Discover God's perfect timing.

- ◆ In V. 26, God sent the Angel Gabriel to Mary.
- ◆ In V. 28, The angel declares to Mary "Thou art highly favored".
- ◆ In V. 29, Mary was stricken with fear and shock.
- ◆ In V. 30, "Mary, you have found favor with God".
- ◆ In V. 31, "You're going to have a boy called Jesus".
- ◆ In V. 32, "He'll be called the Son of the Highest".
- ◆ In V. 33, "Of His kingdom there shall be no end".

And how does Mary respond in V.34?

"Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man"?

Question: How did Mary respond to the angel's words?

Answer:

- ◆ She was puzzled and needed more information.
- ◆ She was single and not sexually active.
- ◆ She was a virgin and had never heard of this before.

Question: How does God answer Mary's troubled heart in V. 34?

Answer: With an encouraging word in Vs. 35-37

(V. 35) "The Holy Spirit will conduct the Immaculate Conception and oversee the process Mary."

(V. 36) "I've got an encouraging word that will help you to believe Mary".

What is it?

- ◆ "Your cousin Elizabeth (who is beyond childbearing age) is now six months pregnant".
- ◆ "And, if God can do a miracle for Elizabeth, then God can do a miracle for you."
- ◆ "Mary, so see your cousin and remember this, (V. 37) "For with God, nothing shall be impossible."

But, what about me?

- ◆ That was Mary, what about me?
- ◆ How can God use me in His plan today?
- ◆ How did Mary cooperate with God?
- ◆ What is it that enables God to work out His plan in my life?

- ◆ Three trademarks of a real disciple.
- ◆ Three characteristics of a growing Christian.
- ◆ Three qualities that promote your spiritual progress.

Quality #1. A Surrendered Will

Question: What did Mary say after the angel told her two things?

1. "You will birth the Son of God."
2. "You need to go see your cousin."

Question: How did Mary respond?

(V.38) "And Mary said, behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word and the angel departed from her." (Mission accomplished)

Question: What was Mary's response to the will of God?

Answer: "Be it unto me according to Thy word."

- ◆ Even though she was young and would have to be in secret.
 - ◆ Even though the spousal period was one year, and adultery resulted in stoning.
 - ◆ Even though people would criticize her for being pregnant (while still engaged to Joseph).
1. Mary surrendered her will to God's will!
 2. Mary was willing to give up all of her rights!
 3. Mary was willing to die to herself and do what was right (instead of what was convenient).

What's the application?

- ◆ Am I willing to absolutely surrender myself to God?
- ◆ Am I willing to obey God, even without answers to all of my questions?
- ◆ Is there any part of my life that I have yet to surrender to God?

But, what about my life? What about my plans and goals? Where is victory found over my self-life, self-preservation and self-promotion?

(V. 28) "Mary said, behold, the handmaid of the Lord."

Fact: The word "handmaid" (DOULE) means: "slave girl"

Fact: Mary was saying that she was a bond slave, or a servant of God.

Fact: A servant is one who advances others at the expense of themselves (without complaint).

Fact: A servant is one at the total disposal of their master (the safest place to be).

Quality 2. An Obedient Heart

Question: What happened after Mary said "yes, Lord"?

Answer: She took the next step in the process:

(V. 39) "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias".

Fact: Mary obeyed God when three things were against her:

1. She was an unwed mother and who would believe her story? (Luke 1:26. Matt 1:18)
2. She would have to face Joseph and chance his rejection and shock of a broken trust. (Matt. 1:19,20)
3. She faced the threat of being condemned to death for adultery. (Deuteronomy 22:23)

Yet in the face of adversity –

- ◆ She is willing to obey God,
- ◆ She is willing to add works to her faith,
- ◆ She is willing to please God above all others.
- ◆ She is willing to trust God to work out all of the details outside of her control.

What's the application?

- ◆ Am I willing to obey God and then trust the Lord with the consequences to follow?
- ◆ Am I willing to give up my present plans for a future reward?
- ◆ Am I willing to tithe and give offerings and then experience the open windows of Heaven
- ◆ Am I willing to break up with my unsaved boyfriend or girlfriend and trust God for His choice down the road?
- ◆ Am I willing to maintain my integrity and risk losing my job because of it?
- ◆ Am I willing to lay aside every weight and sin to experience the joy of a clear conscience?
- ◆ Am I willing to submit to my parents, even though I don't like the rules and regulations, curfews and guidelines?
- ◆ Am I willing to obey God and do what He's been telling me to do?

By the way,

V.39 says, "Mary arose and went in to Judah with haste."

- ◆ Eager to follow the angels directions.
- ◆ Eager to see the miracle for herself.
- ◆ Eager to meet Elizabeth face to face.

"With haste" means:

Don't put off till tomorrow what God had told you to do today. (Repeat)

"With haste" means:

"My progress in God tomorrow will go no further than my obedience takes me today."

Quality 3. A Grateful Spirit

(Vs. 46-55) is known as Mary's song

- ◆ In Verse 46, she "magnifies the Lord".
- ◆ The word "magnify" (MEGALUNEI) means: "to declare the greatness of"
- ◆ The idea is habitual or, Mary continued on to magnify the Lord (it was her constant practice).
- ◆ In Verse 47, she "rejoices in God my Savior" (which means)
 - Mary praised God with all of her heart!
 - Mary believed that God was in control!
 - Mary trusted God with what she couldn't see!

What did Mary praise God for?

Why was she so grateful?

1. She was grateful for God's Salvation (V.47)

- ◆ She calls God "my Savior"
- ◆ She was a sinner saved by grace and needed to trust the Lord for her salvation.
- ◆ She rejoices that God saw her need and saved her.

What's the application?

There is not a sinner alive that God will not save if they will only ask Him to save them.

2. She was grateful for God's compassion (V.48)

- ◆ "For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
- ◆ Mary recognized where she came from (to the world she was poor, obscure, unknown, insignificant and without value).
- ◆ The words "low estate" mean that Mary was considered the least within her own household.

What's the application?

- ◆ That no matter how low you might be and,
- ◆ No matter how nothing you may feel,
- ◆ God cares enough to reach down to us, take us by the hand, lift us up where we belong, and give us purpose and meaning in life.

3. She was grateful for God's power (Vs. 49-52)

(V. 49) He is "mighty" (a miracle worker)

(V. 50) He is "merciful" (in sending us a Savior)

(V. 51) He is "strong" (able to do great things).

(V. 52) He is "still in charge" (over all those who are proud and humble).

4. She was grateful for God's deliverance (Vs. 53,54)

- ◆ In V. 53, God fills those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.
- ◆ In V. 54, God remembers His mercy, as Israel was desperate for mercy and deliverance. Why?
- ◆ Because Israel was enslaved by the Romans.
- ◆ God's people were frantic in their search for a deliverer.
- ◆ And Mary proclaims Jesus is the answer to deliver you from the tyranny of Satan, sin, and self-destruction!

Conclusion

Ask: Like Mary, are you finding it difficult to understand all that God is doing in your life?

Ask: Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, are you praying for something and the answer has yet to come?

Ask: Like Israel, are you under the power of some sin, and need to be delivered from it today?

Ask: Do you want to grow and make progress with God (and not waste time?)

Do you want

1. A surrendered will?
2. An obedient heart?
3. A grateful spirit?

Ask God to give you these and you'll have them.

Bill Kirk