

Introduction

- My Christmas lights got cut! That's enough to get you out of the Christmas spirit...
- What puts you in the Christmas spirit? For many of us, it's Christmas carols. As soon as Thanksgiving is over, you tune your radio to the station that plays Christmas music all day every day. There's something special about Christmas songs. In December, you come to church expecting to hear Christmas songs.
- Christmas is a season of rejoicing. The great carols of the faith help us to rejoice...
- [Luke 1:39-56](#) - known throughout church history as "The Visitation." Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and sings a song of praise known as "The Magnificat" throughout church history.
- [Luke 1-2](#) = "The infancy narrative" As Luke records the birth of Jesus, it's full of singing. Mary's song, Zechariah's song, the angels' song, and Simeon's song.
- The incarnation should cause us to sing praise to God.
- However... maybe this Christmas you don't feel like singing praise to God. It's been a hard year. Some have lost loved ones. Some of you have had major transitions in your family that have been difficult. Some have had major financial difficulties. Some of you have dealt with marriages falling apart. You might not feel like rejoicing.
- You would think that Mary would not have felt like rejoicing - a teenage girl - her brain still swirling as she considers the message of Gabriel. She's pregnant - she's an unwed mother - she has a fiancée who could end their relationship and publicly shame her. There's much for her to be

scared about, but instead of walking in fear, she walks in faith. Instead of complaining about her lot in life, she rejoices.

- How can you rejoice this Christmas? Even if you've had a hard year, how can you exchange your worry, sorrow, grief, for rejoicing? Three simple ways ways:

Focus on your blessings.

- Gabriel's message: "The Most High will overshadow you... You will conceive a son" 1:36: "Elizabeth has conceived in her old age... Nothing is impossible with God."
- Wonder. Not only is Mary pregnant, but her old cousin? Everybody had lost hope that Elizabeth would ever have a child.
- Mary must see Elizabeth. The unwed, pregnant teenager makes her way to unnamed town in Judea - approx. 70 mile journey from Nazareth. Did she travel by herself? A dangerous journey...
- The greeting - Elizabeth's baby leaps within her womb when Mary greets Elizabeth. In the womb, baby John already doing what God sent him to do - pointing to the significance of Jesus.
- Elizabeth filled with the Spirit of God acknowledges the work of God in her young cousin's life: "Blessed are you among women..."
- 1:43: "How should the mother of **my Lord** come to me?" Elizabeth knows the significance of the child in Mary's womb.
- 1:45: "Blessed is she who believes..." Is Elizabeth thinking of her husband who failed to believe?
- *Blessed* - Word used three times to describe Mary. Elizabeth describes Mary blessed 2xs. Mary describes herself blessed in 1:48. Elizabeth describes Jesus as blessed in 1:42. Originally, Greek word for blessed used to describe a member of the upper class. Mary was NOT upper class - BUT God had elevated her... not to upper class but favored by Him for His purpose.

- Mary bursts into song. “My soul **magnifies** the Lord.” *Magnifies* = to enlarge. God is already large - no one greater than God. Mary: “Be greater in my life...” Powerful statement.
- Could Mary really have said these things? Just a teenager... Were these Mary’s words? Did they come from somewhere else? Mary would have grown up learning the Scripture. Familiar with Hannah’s song ([1 Sam. 2](#)) - lots of similarities. Magnificat = Mary interpreting what Gabriel’s message means.
- Why does Mary want God to be greater in her life? Because He has blessed her. “He has looked with favor on the humble condition of His servant...” (vs. 48).
- “Surely, all generations will call me blessed because God has done great things for me...” That’s what we’re doing today - we’re studying this ancient story and agreeing generations later that this unwed, teenage, pregnant mother-to-be was blessed.
- Blessed? Rejoicing? Where’s the complaining? What about all that Mary would experience. The ridicule, the questioning of her fiancée, the pressure of being the mother of Jesus. Mary has plenty of reason to complain. “God, it’s too hard. God, I can’t do it.” If anyone had reason to worry it was Mary. Wouldn’t you be worried?
- Mary’s attitude: “I get to...” She gets to serve the Lord. She gets to play a unique role in redemptive history even if that’s going to bring on significant hardship, it’s worth it.
- **Complaining is natural. Rejoicing is unnatural.** But, Worry and complaining are the farthest things from your mind when you are overwhelmed by God’s grace and realize the blessing of God in your life. Our problem is that we are not very overwhelmed by God’s grace and His blessing on our lives.
- Why do you complain instead of rejoice?
 - **You complain because you fail to realize what you have.** – *Blessed by be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly*

places. – [Ephesians 1:3](#) – Circumstances do not change what you have in Christ.

- **You complain because you do not believe God is bigger than your circumstances.** Was it going to be hard for Mary? Yes, but God was in control. He was orchestrating the events of her life for His purpose, and He's doing the same in you.
- **You complain because you are selfish.** You simply want your way, and you expect God and others to give you what you want. But, God has every right to do in your life what He wants for His purpose, not what you want, even if that means putting you through immense difficulty to accomplish what He wants in you. After all, you're a dead man – ([Luke 9:23](#), [Galatians 2:20](#))

Focus on others.

- Mary blessed to be a blessing. [Gen. 12](#) - This is what God has always wanted for His people - blessed to be a blessing.
- It's easy to rejoice when you are focused not on yourself or your circumstances but on what God is doing in the lives of others.
- Notice how other-focused Mary's words are. His mercy is available to all (vs. 50).
- What God has done for Mary, He will do for all. He will show ALL mercy.
- He will lift up the lowly and humble. God has reversed Mary's situation. God will reverse the situation of all who believe. All who believe will be blessed.
- God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble ([James 4:6](#)).
- Mary thinks about her own people - how they have been beaten down while the other nations have been exalted.
- Centuries earlier, it was Egypt, then it was Babylon and Assyria, now it was Rome. This child in her womb will lift up her people and scatter those who oppose God.

- Mary looks back at her nation's history - she looks all the way back to Abraham. Abraham's story was like Mary's story. It was a story of mercy - a story of kindness. God came to Abraham like he came to Mary. God promised Abraham he would build a nation through the descendants of Abraham that would bless the world.
- But, where was the blessing? Israel wasn't a blessing. Israel was oppressed. Time and again in their history, their enemies had gotten the best of them. Where was the blessing?
- The blessing was in her womb - a child who was a deliverer - but the kind of deliverer no one expected - not even Mary. A child who deliver His people from eternal death. A child who would not topple the throne of Rome - but the throne of Satan - the one who in the garden who tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God.
- This child in the womb was the child promised to Mary generations ago. This child was the blessing.
- Mary doesn't know how this child was the deliverer, but she knows this child is for the people of God.
- She rejoices because of what this child will do in the lives of others.
- The root of complaining and worry is a life that is focused primarily on self. Therefore, the cure for worry and complaining is to take your eyes off of yourself and begin to consider what God desires to do not only in you but in those around you.
- **God has extended grace to you so that He might ultimately extend grace to others. You were saved for God's glory and the good of others!**
- **How do you know if you focus more on yourself than you do others?**
 - **Do you rejoice more in what God is doing in your life or what God is doing in the lives of others?** "For I could wish I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh." [Romans 9:3](#)

- **Are you more concerned about your preferences than you are Gospel proclamation?** – What's most important is not what you want but the Gospel going forth. Could it be that our preferences are our god? Do we worship our preferences or God? Could it be that our demand to have our preferences met are actually hindering the proclamation of the Gospel?
- **Are you more concerned about how people are investing in you or how you are investing in others?** Do you desire to be catered to, or do you desire to be a spiritual parent that goes out of your way to help someone else grow in Christlikeness
- The cure for complaining is NOT to sulk about your problems but rather to focus on others. When you focus on others, it will lead you to rejoice as you see God at work through you in the lives of others.

Focus on the Good News.

- Mary does not know everything God is going to accomplish through the baby in her womb, but she knows it's Good News.
- Newsflash: you don't know everything.
- You don't know everything theologically.
- You don't know the mysteries of God. You don't know everything God is doing in this world, but you know Good News.
- Mary did not know how God would save the world through her Son – no idea He would be rejected, homeless, mocked, etc. No idea He would be tortured, crucified on a Roman cross, humiliated before all humanity. No idea that the baby in her womb would one day experience the wrath of God – she had no idea that the death He would die would be for her. It would be her sins that would ultimately put the little baby in her womb on the cross. She had no idea that her baby would rise from the dead, victorious over sin and death so that she and all who believe could escape death. While she didn't understand the full work of redemption, she focused on the Good News trusting God was going to work through this child even if it was beyond her ability to comprehend.

- Good News has come to you - your life has been changed. You don't have all the answers, but you have THE answer. Jesus saves. You know the Good News - God is at work in the hearts of those who believe to bring us into a new heaven and new earth where there will be no more.
- This Christmas, choose your focus: bad news or good news.
- **Do not focus on the bad news you keep telling yourself** - Life can't get any better. (Woe is me.)
- **Do focus on the good news you must tell yourself** - Life can't get any better. (Rejoice because God has given me new life and wants to use me to help others experience new life.)
- Do you believe? Turn to Him today. Repent and trust in the One who will make your heart sing. Trust the One who will give you every reason to rejoice.
- Are you a believer who is filled with worry and complaining? Exchange it for rejoicing. Repent this morning and rediscover your reason for rejoicing.