

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

³⁹Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah^a, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth^b. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit^c. ⁴²And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb^d! ⁴³And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me^e? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy^f. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord^g.^a

^a 1:39 **Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah.** The word for "arose" is used frequently by Luke in the New Testament. It described Jesus standing to read in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:39), the healed paralytic getting up from the ground (Luke 5:25) and the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:24).

Why the hurry? The text does not say, but we do know that the angel directed Mary's attention to Elizabeth. This certainly would have been the place to find a sympathetic ear.

This city was probably Hebron, since that is the one Judah set aside for the sons of Aaron (Joshua 21:9-11), Zacharias being of that number. This is a historic place, having been the home of Abraham, the location of the tomb of the patriarchs (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Leah), the site of David's coronation over all Israel and the location of his palace before he reigned in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:5).

If this was Hebron, Mary took a longer journey (about 80 miles as the crow flies) than she and Joseph made when Jesus was born.

^b 1:40 **entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.** The text allows for the possibility that the conception of Jesus took place in Judah while Mary was visiting Elizabeth.

^c 1:41 **When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.** Do you see what Dr. Luke points out twice about the resident of Elizabeth's womb (here and verse 44)? That was not part of Elizabeth's body. That was a baby. Luke records the same word for baby from Elizabeth's mouth that he used when Jesus was born (Luke 2:16). The baby responded to sound—perhaps to the presence of the Creator.

The filling ministry of the Holy Spirit (see the note on Luke 1:15) often results in bold utterances. Elizabeth had been given a reminder of the mighty deeds of God and responded accordingly (see Acts 2:4, 11).

^d 1:42 **she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.** Elizabeth echoed the words of Gabriel (1:28). Maybe he paid her a visit as well. Note the overflow of emotion here. This woman was hooting and hollering.

^e 1:43 **how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me.** Elizabeth was humble like Mary and did not consider herself worthy of such a visit. Somehow Elizabeth knew that Mary was carrying her Lord. Notice Elizabeth's understanding of the deity of Messiah. He was her Lord.

^f 1:44 **when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.** Gabriel had told Zacharias that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb (1:15).

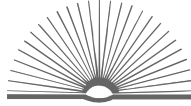
^g 1:45 **blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.** On an earthly level we are sometimes relieved when someone else is as fleshly as we are. Then the bar is not set too high for our performance. Elizabeth had the right idea. She found joy in Mary's belief. As 1 Corinthians 13:6 says that love "...rejoices with the truth."

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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^a 1:39-45 Mary and Elizabeth were related, even though the Scripture does not tell us how. But the two women were very different. Mary was young. Elizabeth was old. Mary lived in Galilee. Elizabeth lived in Judea. Mary was a virgin. Elizabeth had been married for many years. Mary was betrothed to a common laborer. Elizabeth was married to a priest who approached God on behalf of a nation.

Different as they were, you can see in this text the obvious connection the two had. Why? They went to the same well for their joy. If you have trouble relating to other Christians, maybe it is because you are using earthly standards to choose your friends. You have so much more in common with someone who is very different from you (consider this pair) when it is the Lord Jesus who connects you. All you have to do to understand this principle is to look at the twelve disciples Jesus chose. Aside from some family relationships, about the only thing that connected most of them was Jesus.

God-honoring friendships spring from having your relational appetite changed. When Paul said, "from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:16), he was talking about seeing people as eternal souls rather than tools to help me get where you want to go in this world. Here are some of the delights of Mary and Elizabeth to mirror if you want to have friendships that please God:

1. You find joy in God's work instead of your friends' resumes. You say, "Look at what the Lord has done for us."
2. You find joy in serving with others rather than staying aloof. You say, "This relationship can bring glory to God."
3. You find joy in humility rather than in maintaining an image. You say, "I do not deserve a friend like this."
4. You find joy in God Himself rather than thinking you need people to meet your needs. You say, "I will walk closely with my friends if I walk closely with our Lord." Worship with them.
5. You find joy in encouraging others rather than thinking you have no responsibility for their souls. You say, "My job is to increase my friend's faith."

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