

December 24, 2023

“Expectant Mothers’ Faith”
Lesson 4

Luke 1:36-45, 56

Intro

Luke’s gospel is unique in several ways. It has more material regarding women than the other two synoptic gospels of Matthew and Mark. For example, it is the only gospel that writes about Jesus’ interaction with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Another example is today’s text, dealing with Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth’s house upon hearing from the angel that Elizabeth was pregnant.

Read Luke 1:36-45, 56

1. vs. 36: The angel Gabriel speaks to Mary here about her relative, Elizabeth
The news of Elizabeth’s pregnancy doesn’t get to Mary until Gabriel tells her
The verse tells us that Elizabeth is already 6 months pregnant
Elizabeth’s pregnancy is miraculous
She has already gone through menopause
Vs. 1:7 and 1:18 describe her as “well-advanced in years)
She has been barren, described as “unable to conceive”
This information about Elizabeth would no doubt strengthen Mary’s faith
Gabriel has just told Mary (vs.26-35) that she would bear a child, though a virgin
2. vs. 37: This verse reminds us that God’s words do not fail to come true
Abraham and Sarah were older than Zechariah and Elizabeth
From a human standpoint, they should not have been able to have children any more
Yet, God gives them the ability to have Isaac, fulfilling his promise to Abraham
3. vs. 38: Mary’s response to the angel’s message about her carrying Jesus is significant
“I am the Lord’s servant. May your word in me be fulfilled”
She has previously asked “how” this could be, since she is a virgin
She is not doubting, but innocently asking how this could be possible
Her words here indicate a willingness to do whatever God asks of her
They indicate an obedient spirit and a servant’s heart
4. vs. 39: Mary goes to visit her relative Elizabeth
The only geographical note is “the hill country of Judea”
A possible/likely town is that of Hebron, given to the priests in Joshua 21
Mary is in Nazareth; Hebron is about 100 miles away from Nazareth
If Elizabeth lived in another city, the closest would still be at least 35 miles distant
Either distance is a long way to go on foot
She either traveled with a caravan, or with a companion; both ways provide safety
The fact that she “hurried” shows she was eager to see Elizabeth
She wants to see her and talk to her about the miracle that the angel told her of
5. vs. 40: Mary enters Elizabeth’s home and greets her
This likely included both a kiss and a traditional saying like, “Peace be with you”

6. vs. 41: Based on what is present in Luke so far, Mary is likely not showing her pregnancy yet
She also does not tell Elizabeth she is carrying a child
Yet Elizabeth's child (John the Baptist) *leaps* in her womb!

He recognizes that he is in the presence of the anticipated Messiah
Elizabeth is "filled with the Holy Spirit", a miraculous sign of confirmation
Luke's writings show the Holy Spirit as a key figure throughout
They feature about 60% of all the NT mentions of the Holy Spirit

7. vs. 42: Elizabeth's statement here is prompted by the Holy Spirit revealing what's going on
Mary would not likely have been showing yet

Elizabeth calls the child Mary is carrying "blessed" (praised as holy)
For the reason why Mary herself is called "blessed", see vs. 45

8. vs. 43: Elizabeth here is the first in Scripture to call Jesus "Lord"

She may not have totally understood what this term said about Jesus
She was certainly filled with the Holy Spirit at this point
Her words also show her great humility—"Why am I so favored?"
She recognizes her smallness in comparison to this great occurrence

9. vs. 44: For the second time, Elizabeth notes her baby "leaped" upon hearing Mary's voice
She adds here, "for joy"

John, as a baby in the womb, couldn't see Jesus
The Holy Spirit's presence in Elizabeth also allows John to "see"
John's purpose for coming into the world is directly connected to Jesus' coming
He "leaps for joy" at the presence of Jesus

10. vs. 45: Elizabeth's words here show the reason for Mary's being "blessed"

Mary *believed* the words the angel told her about what would happen
God has chosen her to be the vessel through whom His promises would be fulfilled

11. vs. 56: Mary stays with Elizabeth "for about three months"

Elizabeth was already 6 months pregnant when Mary arrived (vs. 36)
Mary stayed during the final trimester of the pregnancy
Elizabeth would have needed help during this time, especially because she was older
Mary also benefits, being in a place which is safe as her pregnancy advances

Application: Mary stands as a model of faith. She believed what the angel told her, and did not question it or doubt it. Zechariah, however, asked for a sign of proof when told that he and Elizabeth would have a child. The well-educated and seasoned priest had less faith than the uneducated teenage girl. What this points to is the fact that some people are Zechariahs and some are Marys. Some understand much and desire to believe, but it doesn't come as naturally or as easily as it does for some others, some of whom don't have the same amount of education or study behind them. We are all striving to grow in our faith, and that should be the thing we focus on in today's passage. Whether you are a Mary or a Zechariah or some other description of faith, the goal is to grow in faith and obedience to God's word and will.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for the example of Mary's confident belief in Your promises. Help our faith to be more like Mary's, especially in those areas where we tend to be more uncertain. Thank You for the encouragement of the faithful people of the past that we see in Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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