

CELEBRATING PROMISES FULFILLED Sunday School- December 25, 2011

Unifying Topic: ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE

Lesson Text

I. A Celebration For The Personal Grace Of The Lord (Luke 1:46-49)

II. A Celebration Of The Mercy Of The Lord (Luke 1:50-53)

III. A Celebration Of The Faithfulness Of The Lord (Luke 1:54-55)

The Main Thought: And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (Luke 1:46-47, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Faithfulness has timeless benefits. How can acts of faithfulness be rewarded in a time far from the actual acts? Because Abraham was faithful to God and God was faithful to the promise to give Abraham many descendants God acknowledged Mary's faithfulness to Him by choosing her to be mother of the Savior.

Lesson Aim: To review Mary's song of praise to God for His unwavering faithfulness and power.

Life aim: To help the students understand the faithfulness of God, which can be seen in the account of the virgin birth.

1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

1:47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

1:48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

1:50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

1:51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

1:52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

1:53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

1:54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

1:55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

HISTORY:

¹The book of Luke is a Gospel that contains Narrative History, Genealogy, Sermons, Parables, and some Prophetic Oracles. It is the third of the synoptic gospels. Luke, a doctor, and a Greek Christian, wrote it circa 59-61AD. The key personalities of the book include Jesus Christ, His parents Mary and Joseph, The twelve Disciples, John the Baptist, Herod the Great, Jewish religious leaders, and Pilate.

The book is written to record an accurate account "*so that you may know the exact truth*" (1:4), of the life of Jesus Christ as the perfect Savior of the world. He writes to the Greeks to present Jesus in His perfect manhood as the "Son of Man", the savior of all men.

The Book of Luke ²is stated to be an "*orderly account*" (i.e., summary) of "*the things that have been fulfilled*" (i.e., Jesus Christ's story). It begins telling of the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:11) first appearing with "*good news*" to Zechariah telling him of his wife Elizabeth to have a son (to be called John -- John the Baptist) that will precede the coming of the Messiah. Then, the angel Gabriel goes, a month later, to Nazareth (a village in Galilee) to speak to the "*virgin Mary*" (who was engaged to be married to Joseph -- a descendent of King David) -- telling her that she will give birth to a son to be called Jesus, who "*will reign over the house of Jacob (i.e., Israel) forever; His kingdom will never end*" (Luke 1:33). Mary was told that the "*Holy Spirit will come upon her; the baby will be born the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35). Mary's relative (aunt) was Elizabeth, who was to be the mother of John the Baptist had been barren, but with God "*nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:38). The pregnant Mary (mother of Jesus and cousin of Elizabeth), visits the pregnant Elizabeth, and John leaps for joy in the womb. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Ghost and speaks, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb*" (Luke 1:42KJV). "... *You believed that God would do what he said; that is why he has given you this wonderful blessing*" (Luke 1:45NIV).

LESSON:

Luke 1:46-49 A Celebration For The Personal Grace Of The Lord

She Has Been Redeemed (vv46-47)

1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, — Mary's great song of praise is known as the Magnificat. This is the Latin translation of the first few words which Mary speaks and it literally means, "My soul

¹ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/15951195/Summary-of-Luke>

² <http://www.biblenotes.net/luke.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm/sundayschool.html>

celebrates the Lord." It has some similarity to the Song of Hannah (1Sam.2:1-10). However, there is a striking difference between the two songs. Hannah proclaimed a triumph over her enemies; Mary proclaimed God and His glorious mercy to man.

Mary was bound to be tired and exhausted. She had just arrived from a long trip and had not even had time to sit down. As soon as she walked in the door, Elizabeth began her proclamation of praise under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hearing what Elizabeth had said, Mary, even though she is young, an unmarried virgin, and pregnant, begins to lift her voice in praise to the Lord. Mary forgot her tiredness, for her faith was being confirmed. She now knew that the angel who had come to her was not a figment of her imagination, not an illusion, not a false vision, not some dreamy state of mind (v28). He was real and his message that she, as a virgin, would bear the Son of God was true. Her faith was reassured and confirmed.

What did Mary have to sing about? She was now focused! Though she's responding to what Elizabeth said, she immediately turns the eye of her soul upward! ³In doing so, she reveals a heart that is in love with the Lord and also a mind that has been saturated with the Old Testament Scriptures. She teaches us that we can praise the Lord in spite of our circumstances; and that God's grace is sufficient even in the most troubled of times. *Her great desire was to magnify the Lord...NOT herself! Magnify mean glorifies; exalts; make large; honor highly; to declare His greatness; to make Him great in the eyes of others! Even though she was a pregnant teen from Nazareth, engaged to marry a poor carpenter and people were talking, from Mary's vantage point Jesus surely wasn't "*planned*"...but wasn't He? Mary rose above her situation! (*Brian Bell Sermon Notes). She magnified the Lord, while the Catholic Church erroneously magnifies her. She was the recipient of grace, not the source of grace! Mary glorified God in song for what he was going to do for the world through her!

1:47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Mary praises the Lord with her soul and she now has joy in her spirit for Salvation. Body, soul, and spirit has come together. She made a personal confession: "God is my Savior." She was proclaiming that God saw her need and saved her. Salvation is a good reason to praise the Lord. When you're saved and you know it, it will put some rejoicing in your heart! You may not shout, but you want to! She had been redeemed! Its celebration time and she rejoiced!

She Has Been Regarded (v48a)

1:48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: Mary recognized where she had come from, just how lowly a person she was. In the eyes of the world she was a nobody: poor, obscure, unknown, insignificant, of little purpose and, meaning in life. According to the religious laws of her culture, Mary would face death by stoning, for being an unwed pregnant virgin. God shows that He chooses the least person to more clearly demonstrate His mercy and power. He will reach far down to get us. He will take us by the hand, lift us up, and give us purpose, meaning, and significance. He regarded (turned his eyes upon) Mary. Mary knows that she does not deserve wonderful favor of the Lord that has been extended to her. Yet, the Lord did it anyway and she said be it unto me.

She Has Been Rewarded (vv48b-49)

1:48b ...for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. God will make us somebody and use us, by giving us a full and meaningful life for all others to see, even for generations to come and be called blessed. To be the means by which the God of eternity enters human history is very memorable! Through her obedience, she shall be called blessed! God caused Mary to be remembered from that time forth of all generations. In fact her reward caused generations to also receive the blessing in their lives.

1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; Mary proclaimed three of the glorious attributes of God: He is mighty! He is holy! And He is mercy!

1. Mary proclaimed God's power. Two things in particular were in her mind, two phenomenal things:
 - a. The promised Messiah was now to be born. This would be a great reward to the world! The hope of the world was now to be fulfilled after so many generations of waiting. God's power was now to be demonstrated in a way never before witnessed. Mary's personal thanks to the Lord for her pregnancy and the privilege granted to her was all God's mighty power. She couldn't help but express His might.
 - b. The promised Messiah was to be born of a virgin. Mary was the incubator (the carrier) and it was not the seed of a man! It was to be an event and a method never before witnessed. A miracle was to be performed! As Mary had testified, "*He that is mighty had done to me great things.*"
 - i. A great thing indeed that a virgin should conceive.

³ http://www.sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/Luke%201_46-55.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm/sundayschool.html>

ii. A great thing indeed that the Messiah, who had been so long promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born.

2. Mary proclaimed that God had 'done great things'. The Lord God has all power and is able to do whatever is required for His work of salvation. He is 'Almighty', and will do everything necessary to win us, and bring us into eternal life.

1:49b ...and holy is his name.

3. Mary proclaimed God's holiness; that is, God is to be set apart as different from all others. His very nature, His very being is different. God is both pure being and pure in being, both perfect being and perfect in being. God is holy in name and holy in being, set apart and different from all others.

Luke 1:50-53 A Celebration Of The Mercy Of The Lord

The Permanence Of His Mercy (v50)

1:50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. There were at least two thoughts in Mary's mind. 1) God has mercy; 2) He has mercy on those that fear Him; and 3) His mercy will be from generation to generation!

1. God's glorious mercy to her meant that God had proven to be her personal Savior.
2. God's glorious mercy is finally sending the Messiah (Savior) to those who feared (reverenced) Him. They will never try to offend Him. They will always try to do what pleases Him. God will be kind to such people. Note, that Mary saw God's mercy passing down from generation to generation because He is abundant in goodness, and He delighteth in mercy.

Mary knows that she isn't the only one who has received mercy from God. His mercy is to be revealed to every generation, until the return of Christ to this earth. The mercy of God is solidified today and throughout eternity! Mary celebrated the mercy of God!

1:51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

The Performance Of His Mercy (vv51-52)

God acted and showed us His mercy. ⁴There are seven great statements about what God has done to bring salvation into the world:

- I. God hath shewed strength with his arm (1:51). Mary continued to praise God. She told of what He did by His great strength. He had reversed the order of things on earth. And note: He had done it with the strength of His arm.
- II. God has 'scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts' (1:51). The proud are prideful in their thoughts, in the imagination of their hearts. In her day, these would be the Pharisees and other religious experts, the same people Jesus confronted in His ministry. The Lord had scattered the proud. They think themselves better...
 - by looks • by wealth • by achievement • by person • by ability • by position
 - by heritage • by possessions

1:52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

III. God has 'pulled the powerful down from their thrones' (1:52). Whilst those who think they have the intelligence to question God are scattered (see above), those who think they have more power than God are 'pulled down'. The illusion of power continues to this day, as we can see in world affairs all around us. Those who think they know better will never trust God for their salvation.

IV. God has 'exalted (lifted) up the lowly' (1:52). At this point in the Magnificat, we hear about the nature of God's salvation that turns the world's values upside down. Those with power are pulled down and the lowly are lifted up.

Mary in her song had predicted that at the end of time, the Lord will have dethroned the mighty and exalted them of low degree. The mighty are those who sit in positions of power, authority, and influence over others. The picture concerns those who take their power and...

- Seek their own ends • fail to serve • push others down • abuse others
- misuse others • by-pass others • enslave others • deprive others

The Promise Of His Grace (v53)

1:53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

V. God has 'filled the hungry with good things' (1:53). This sentence can mean that God will reward those who are hungry to find God, but this should not blind us to the fact that it is also about His desire to feed the poor,

⁴ www.prayerandbiblestudy.org

and empower His people to do just this.

VI. God has 'sent the rich empty away' (1:53). Those who retain their wealth do so against the wishes of their Maker, who sees all things. Those who regard themselves as 'right' in all spiritual matters and claim riches in the things of God (and it is very easy for this to happen), have little before the throne of grace, as Jesus points out (see Matthew 25:31f.). It is amazing to think that the gap between the rich and the poor in this world continues to increase, but God will bring this to an end, and His Kingdom must demonstrate this Gospel truth.

The Lord filled the hungry and emptied the rich. Those who were rich only in this world's goods are seen stripped of all their earthly goods and sent away empty. And those who had nothing of this world, by who put their trust in God are seen as having received all good things.

Luke 1:54-55 A Celebration Of The Faithfulness Of The Lord God Remembers His Promises (v54)

1:54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

VII. God has 'given help to His servant Israel' (1:54). God is constantly giving His people help. He did this in Old Testament times, and He does this now—to the new Israel and people of God, the church. It is unwise for us to run the church as if everything depends on our efforts; it does not, and the future is in God's hands. God had helped His people. Two specific helps were proclaimed:

1. God had remembered His mercy. The people (Israel) desperately needed God's mercy and God's deliverance. They were enslaved by the Romans; therefore, they were frantic in their search for deliverance, so frantic many were turning to false messiahs and other answers to escape their plight. Some were even finding their security in the Roman state and in humanistic answers instead of God. If a people ever needed God to remember His mercy, it was then. Mary proclaimed that the Lord had remembered His mercy.

God Remembers His People (v55)

1:55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

2. God had remembered His promise of the Messiah. He had promised the Messiah to the fathers of Israel, to Abraham and to Abraham's seed. And note: the promise is now being fulfilled. God had sent the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

This is no casual ending to Mary's song of praise to God. This is Mary's prophecy of the completion of God's Covenant promise.

SUMMARY:

⁵Mary was also a woman of prophetic pronouncement. Her "*Magnificat*" moves from the deeply personal to the explicitly political. God, Mary proclaims, "*has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. . . the Mighty One has done great things for me.*" This peasant girl who a few months later would bear the Son of God then praises God the Mighty One because He has "*brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*" The incarnation of the Son of God, Mary announced, meant the inversion of conventional wisdom. Dethroning political power, plundering rich people, and redistributing food supplies signaled a new age and order.

⁶Mary sings not just a solo aria about her own destiny, but a freedom song on behalf of all the faithful poor in the land. She sings a song of freedom for all who, in their poverty and their wretchedness, still believe that God will make a way where there is no way. Like John the Baptist, Mary prophesies deliverance; she prophesies about a way that is coming in the wilderness of injustice. She sings of a God who "*has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts*"; who "*has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly*"; who "*has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.*" She exults in the God of Abraham; she exalts the God of Jesus Christ. Here at the beginning, Mary rejoices in God's destiny -- for her, and for a world turned upside down. You also can know the mercy of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Turn to Him before its too late and have the same celebration of this song declaring redemption and reward of promises fulfilled through the birth of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION:

The Christmas season is about our relationship with the Lord, making Him Savior and Lord; and about learning to celebrate His glory and His goodness throughout our lives.

⁵ <http://www.journeywithjesus.net/Essays/20061218JJ.shtml>

⁶ <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=675>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm/sundayschool.html>