

How The Spirit Gets You Ready For Christ

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 1, beginning at verse 39. Today's sermon text is Luke chapter 1, verses 39 through 56.

This is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient, authoritative word for you, His people. We read in verse 39 that Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

And it happened when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, For there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.

[1 : 24] Verse 46. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, for He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me. And holy is His name, and His mercy is on those who fear Him, from generation to generation.

He has shown the strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel. In remembrance of His mercy, He has spoken to our fathers, as He spoke to Abraham and to His seed forever.

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house. The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

[2 : 39] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord stands forever. As Gabriel said in Luke 1.37, no word from God shall be void of power.

Let's pray. Lord, I ask that You will illumine Your Word, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that Your Word will go forth with power.

And I ask, Lord, in front of my brothers and sisters today, what I've been asking You this week, that through the ministry of the Word, You will stir our hearts to worship You.

Please do this today, Lord. Amen. I've been burdened for You, and I know there are some who are visiting today, maybe for the only time.

What I want to make very clear, my understanding from Scripture, is that the peace promised at Christmas, it's not for everyone. I don't want you leaving here with a false assurance of salvation.

[3 : 55] Would you look at Luke 2, verse 14? The angels declare peace on earth among those with whom God is pleased.

It's only on those upon whom God's favor rests. That's who the peace of Christmas is for. It's not for everyone.

It is for everyone who will repent and believe. But it is not unconditional. The condition is the one that Christ Himself has already fulfilled.

And your response is to receive it by faith and worship Him. For those who don't fear God and who don't worship Him, you have no peace with God. Think about the first coming of Jesus Christ.

It was not peaceful for most people. At the first coming of Jesus Christ, the demons trembled in terror.

[5 : 07] It's not peaceful for them. The first coming of Christ was confusing for the legalists. Not peaceful. The first coming of Christ was infuriating for the self-righteous.

They hated Him to the point of killing Him. Christ's second coming will only be good news for you and me if you first have been convicted of the bad news that before the Holy God, you and I are sinners and we deserve God's wrath.

The second coming of Christ will be a nightmare for anyone who remains unrepentant.

You've been warned. Now here's the good news. To be ready for the second coming of Christ, it's all of God.

It's all God's work in your life for His glory. It's all the ministry of the Holy Spirit to prepare you for His second coming. Now if you're in Christ, this is great news.

[6 : 25] But don't get a false assurance and grab something that you don't truly have. Today I want to talk to you about the Holy Spirit preparing His people for Christ's coming.

And I believe what we see in the way that the Holy Spirit worked to prepare people for His first coming is instructive for us now who are waiting for His second coming. The Holy Spirit.

Luke, inspired by God, the Holy Spirit, he references the Spirit 110 times. It's something like 39 times in this book of Luke, this Gospel according to Luke, and then the rest, you know, whatever that would be, 49 or 50 times or so in the book of Acts.

Or 69 times. It's in Luke and Acts almost more than anywhere else besides Paul in the New Testament. It's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we can't miss that in our sermon text today.

So that's my encouragement for us in this passage. It's how the Holy Spirit gets you, God's people, ready for Christ. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

[7 : 34] How the Holy Spirit gets you ready for Christ. Our confession summarizes Scripture this way, chapter 2, paragraph 3, that the Bible's teaching on the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, incarnate, and the Holy Spirit.

That is the foundation of all our communion with God and our comfortable dependence on Him.

What that means is we need to understand how God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in order to have a comfortable dependence and communion with the true God of the Bible.

So in our sermon text, let's see this in five ways. First, the Holy Spirit makes you embrace God's Word.

The Holy Spirit is the one working and actively causing you to receive and embrace and hold on to God's Word. Last week, we saw how the Word of God came to Mary through the angel Gabriel who stands in the presence of God and then how the Holy Spirit promised through Gabriel that Mary would be overshadowed.

Her womb would become the Holy of Holies and in her body she would carry the Son of God, God the Son Himself. We continue in verse 39 how Mary then, after hearing this glorious announcement, we're told in verse 39, Luke 1, 39, she arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste.

[9 : 12] In other words, after receiving this announcement, right away, she starts to travel. She did not go as some say to hide her pregnant tummy because she went with haste. Right away, she got going.

It was likely not yet visible. We can only imagine what would have been going through Mary's mind as she traveled from Nazareth further north in Galilee all the way to the hill country we read in verse 39 to the city of Judah so the foothills around Jerusalem most likely and this distance is about 90 miles.

I calculated how long would it take for a person to travel that distance by foot on those roads and it's about six days if you don't take too many breaks. Six days of travel.

There's a lot of questions we don't have answered in the scripture. I'll admit to you I got a little bit lost and spent way too much time with so many questions I was trying to understand and work out.

We don't know if Mary traveled alone or with help and companion.

We don't know for sure when was the last time that she had been there to visit Jerusalem and to see Zacharias and Elizabeth. Most likely she had been there.

[10 : 28] If you look in Luke chapter 1 verse 10 it's when Zacharias goes as the priest and he's offering the incense to the Lord and the great multitude is gathered at the temple that's most likely Yom Kippur the annual day of atonement where all the believers from Israel would come and from around the world to Jerusalem and because they're close relatives she would have most likely stayed with Elizabeth and heard of why Zacharias is now mute and not able to hear or talk.

And so this makes sense in my mind that this is why it's the place where Mary should go back after hearing from the angel Gabriel she just heard this wonderful report that's also terrifying about Zacharias and so here's a couple most likely in their 60s or so or 70s that would understand this miraculous revelation that the angel Gabriel gave to her.

We read in Luke chapter 1 verse 7 it was Elizabeth and Zacharias who had no children because they were both well advanced in years. Well when God promised to this barren older couple that Elizabeth would become pregnant the angel Gabriel gave to Zacharias this glorious promise I want you to see it with your own eyes look at Luke chapter 1 verse 15 your son John will be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb why is it that God through the angel and through what's kept in scripture for us would make sure we know this that John as a fetus inside of Elizabeth's womb would be filled with the Holy Spirit he wants us to know that because even before John can be born and speak he's already prophesying he's already doing the work of declaring here's the Messiah look at verse 41 in our sermon text

Luke 1 41 and it happened when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb the word is jumped like a gazelle in the mountains leaping and jumping and that's John the Baptist in the womb filled with the Holy Spirit already prophesying someone said he is the most weird looking prophet in all of the Bible transparent skin about six inches long already leaping filled with the Holy Spirit from Mary's perspective this would have been a tremendous encouragement God the Holy Spirit can work physically miraculously in the womb of a mother he did for barren Elizabeth and he can and will for me too what an encouragement to her faith well this messenger is the promised forerunner of Messiah all of the expectations of God's people in the old covenant are put on Messiah the anointed one and those who knew those messianic prophecies know that there's going to be one coming before him leading the way preparing the path

Malachi 3.1 says behold I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me says God the forerunner is preparing the way for God himself well what does that say about this baby in Mary's tummy I picture Luke the physician the historian going back and interviewing Mary much later decades later when she's most likely an elderly woman and now turn in your Bible and see Luke chapter 2 verse 19 Luke notes for us that Mary treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart and then look at Luke chapter 2 verse 55 his mother Mary treasured up all these things in her heart so as he's listening to Mary recount these glorious events and tell from her perspective this is something that struck Luke the historian there's a sign here to help Mary embrace God's word and ponder the glorious truth that God has revealed in her heart receive God's word as true Mary now turn back to Luke chapter 1 verses 3 and 4 here's what Luke is seeking to do with this account of these historical events his standard is complete certainty by faith he writes to Theophilus which means lover of God

[15 : 27] I'm recording these events including these signs and these first hand eyewitness accounts because these are gifts for you that you can have a certainty on the things that happened about the incarnation of God the Son and it's recorded in the scripture for us as a gift as well we hear the word of God we can go back in our imagination and picture Mary and Elizabeth and John the Baptist and this glorious encounter and this sign we receive as true we believe it by faith just like Mary and Elizabeth did see isn't God so gracious he gives us these details in his word even these signs like John the Baptist leaping in the womb that sign is an encouragement of his promise his word is true that's what signs do we carry around if you're married a sign on your finger you made vows and it's a visible reminder of a marriage a bond that you share so God gives us in his word signs and an interpretation of the sign and he makes it so clear in the Bible so that we can receive his word as a gift and embrace it by faith so my invitation to us is to do just that ponder these things exactly how God acted in redemptive history ponder them in your heart because that's how the Holy Spirit makes you his people ready for his second coming he trains you more and more and more to receive and embrace his word the second way the Holy Spirit prepares you for God's coming the second time is that he makes you embrace Jesus his son as God it's that simple there are children here today the Holy Spirit

God the Spirit who is active he wants to make you receive Jesus Christ as God who he is you would want to reject Jesus as God if you were left on your own but if he's giving you that faith to receive Jesus as God that's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life be encouraged well we saw how even in the womb John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit is not done working look at what happens next at the end of verse 41 Luke 1 41 and to get the context go back to verse 40

Mary approaches Elizabeth with this ancient Jewish greeting the example would be like when Jacob comes back with caravans and gifts going before and then he makes himself low to make it very clear in this relationship I'm below you you're above me I'm here to pay you honor and so this greeting would have taken hours of conversation and an exchange if it's done the polite traditional way so Mary comes most likely 13 or 14 years old and then here's Elizabeth the wife of the priest who presided over the day of atonement for all of Israel months ago and Mary makes herself low and greets her and tells her

I'm here I've traveled all this way to tell you about what also happened to me the angel Gabriel showed up now look at Elizabeth's part in the dialogue at the end of verse 41 we're told Elizabeth was now filled with the Holy Spirit see in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit is poured out on every believer but up until this point in redemptive history the Holy Spirit moves in a measured way and the Holy Spirit will fill a person for example Samson and take Samson on like a garment as someone said and accomplish what God needs to do and then release Samson that's how the Holy Spirit fills a prophet to do his mighty acts in the Old Testament and so the Holy Spirit will fill Elizabeth now so that she can give an interpretation to the sign in verse 42 Elizabeth spoke out in a loud voice something out of the usual is happening in the middle of this greeting and this exchange when a person is filled by the Spirit and then speaks in a loud voice in the Old Testament it's so that you will hear what they have to say for example

Deuteronomy 27 14 and 15 God says the Levites shall speak with a loud voice now the Levites were the ones in charge of slaying all those who turn to false gods and what are the Levites to declare to God's people in a loud voice cursed is the one who makes an idol an abomination to the Lord and all the people shall answer and say amen well now it's Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit and saying loudly blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb she blesses Mary blessed are you and then she blesses God the Son taking on the flesh Jesus blessed is the fruit of your womb in verse 43 she blesses herself for being part of this verse 43 why is it granted to me the mother that the mother of my Lord should come to me for indeed as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy that's her interpretation of what just happened she tells us why it was that John in her tummy leaped do you see that at the end of verse 44 he leaped in my womb for joy see what the Holy Spirit does even in the womb fills a person with joy at the sound of Jesus this continues in John's ministry in John chapter 3 verse 29

John the Baptist says the one who has the bride is the bridegroom the bride is the church and the one who has the church God's people is God himself God the Son John the Baptist said the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice therefore this joy of mine is now complete the joy that the Holy Spirit put in John the Baptist in the womb began and it kept growing and when he finally got to see Jesus Christ being ready to be filled by the Spirit and begin his ministry now his joy is complete there's another reversal that's happening in this greeting remember when the angel Gabriel greets Mary she's shocked at what kind of greeting this is because here's Gabriel who stands in the presence of God telling her she's blessed well the same thing happens again now in verse 43

[22 : 38] Elizabeth is making herself low and she's saying I'm so blessed to even be near you and look at what she says specifically in verse 43 why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me she calls Mary the mother of my Lord when a priest's wife the high priest's wife refers to the Lord you only mean one thing you mean God 26 times in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke the word Lord is used in reference to God alone for example Luke 117 you can turn there it's close to where you are Luke 117 make ready a people prepared for the Lord a people prepared for God Luke 1 verse 28 rejoice highly favored one the Lord is with you God is with you so now Elizabeth says you are the mother of my Lord you are the mother of God now that expression mother of God has been used wrongly by the Roman Catholic Church because God is eternal he has no beginning he has no mother but Mary is the mother of God the son who took on flesh she is the mother of Jesus it's through Mary that Jesus

Jesus the Christ has his human nature but divinity is not confined to Jesus the man because God the son is eternal co-equal with God the father but it cannot be confused that Elizabeth has any other view of the man inside of Mary as God the mystery of the incarnation see how the work of John the Baptist even with the spirit filling his mom is being accomplished to confirm to Mary that you can embrace Jesus as God this fulfills what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 4 verses 3

through 5 this forerunner of the Messiah will be a voice crying in the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord make straight in the desert a highway for our God every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth and the glory of the Lord the God of all shall be revealed in this Messiah and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken see this prophecy about the coming of God in the flesh describes the glory of the Lord as being revealed in this Messiah this can only mean the glory of God himself

Isaiah 42 verse 8 says in the words of God the Lord he says I am the Lord that is my name and my glory I will give to no other God does not share his glory with any other being and yet the prophecy about the Messiah is that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in him the only conclusion we can draw is that Jesus in Mary's womb is God and the glory of God is in Jesus Elizabeth ends this greeting in verse 45 by saying blessed is she who believed that's referring to Mary Mary you believe this is the Lord himself in your womb this is God and his glory being displayed for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord do you believe

Jesus is God filled with the Holy Spirit this word from Mary is for you as well blessed are you if you believe for God will fulfill every word about his son Jesus came to earth the first time according to God's word and Jesus is coming a second time according to the word of God believe that Jesus is God the third way that the Holy Spirit prepares God's people for his coming is that the Holy Spirit magnifies to your soul God's attributes the Holy Spirit magnifies to your soul God's attributes look at verse 46 Luke 1 46 Mary said my soul magnifies the Lord verse 47 and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior to magnify means to increase to enlarge exalt elevate raise in estimation

Mary's saying my soul is swelling up with the attributes of God and what she goes into in the verses that follow is called by the Latin phrase the magnificat scholars have pointed out it's a lyrical poem the poet Wadsworth said all lyrical poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling a commentator named Plummer commented that it was neither a response to Elizabeth nor a prayer to God rather it was a meditation it was a psalm just like we have in the Old Testament of personal reflection upon the incarnation this spirit breathed New Testament psalm was uttered by a Jewish peasant girl whose cultural background was the Old Testament scriptures the writings the writings of the Old

[28 : 49] Testament is what she had been raised on and the Bible itself supplies Mary the phrases to use in this outpouring of her praise it's the language of scripture that Mary had known by heart by the time she was a teenager that became the natural vehicle of her praises I want to point out three attributes of God in verses 48 49 and into the next section the first one is God's compassion the Holy Spirit leads Mary to magnify the compassion of God in verse 48 he has regarded the lowly state of his maidservant God regards the lowly slave God who is on the throne over all creation has compassion on the lowly the bondservant for behold henceforth all generations will call me blessed this is similar language to what we read in 2nd Corinthians 1 3 and 4 praise be to the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort second the Holy Spirit magnifies through Mary's words God's might in verse 49 he who is mighty has done great things for me Isaiah 9 6 he the Messiah shall be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace the Holy Spirit magnifies God's compassion God's might and God's holiness also in verse 49 Mary declares holy is his name see the attributes of God are on display in the person of Jesus incarnate now growing in the womb of Mary the holy God in Luke 4 34 even a demon calls Jesus the holy one of

God you see what the consistent effect is of being filled with the Spirit in John it's joyful leaping in Elizabeth it's joyful blessing in Mary it's to magnify all these things come from the Lord it's his generous outpouring of grace when the Holy Spirit fills a person your only desire is to magnify God never yourself and that's how God prepares us for his second coming the Holy Spirit magnifies in your soul the glory the majestic attributes of God well the fourth way that the Holy Spirit magnifies to your soul preparing you for God's second coming is to make it very clear to you that God is faithful the Holy Spirit magnifies God's covenant faithfulness see this in the verses that follow verse 50 is one of the bookends and then verses 54 and 55 are the other bookends they both have this similar theme of God's covenant faithfulness look at verse 50

God's mercy his compassionate loving kindness is on those who fear him from generation to generation he is faithful from one generation to the next and it's the Lord who causes his people to

fear him by his own grace in verse 54 at the end of the bookend Mary says that God has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy in John 1:14 we read that God became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth see in the coming of Jesus God proves his covenant faithfulness he will carry out this covenant of grace in verse 55 she says he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and to his seed forever and he is doing the very thing he promised so those are the two bookends the mercy of God from generation to generation and he says that he will be faithful to his promise that he gave to his seed the seed of Abraham which is

Jesus forever well what's in between these two bookends what else fills up Mary's song of magnifying God I want to point out to you three descriptions of the people who are recipients of God's grace it's the helpless the humble and the hungry from generation to generation God shows mercy to the helpless that's what she declares in verse 51 God has shown strength with his arm he has scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts we've reviewed how lowly Mary is how out of the way Nazareth is Israel as a nation is under the powerful Roman Empire when she travels down to Jerusalem it's run by the corrupt powerful elite who are compromising and making money off of religion and here are the poor the remnant the few truly waiting for the coming of the Messiah and God helps those who are helpless

[34 : 24] Elizabeth Zachariah Mary Simeon here comes God to show them I'm faithful to my promise you are helpless I am your strength so God helps the helpless number two from generation to generation God shows mercy to the humble look at verse 52 God has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly this is confirmed when the work of Christ is finished and the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church 1 Corinthians 1:20 through 24 Paul points out has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe we preach Christ crucified and it's foolishness to the world and it humbles the proud it scatters the arrogant who are puffed up in their own imaginations because Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God and God shows mercy to those he has humbled finally in Mary's song she confirms that from generation to generation

God shows mercy to the hungry look at verse 53 God has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty see in first corinthians 1:27 we were among those fools those lowly in the world that God by grace has chosen to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are listen so that no one might boast in the presence of God if you come to God full needing nothing you will go away with nothing from God it's for the hungry the humble the helpless that the Holy Spirit has drawn before the Holy God that's who he promises to fill to help to sustain and it's for those who approach

God in that low state like Mary that can say as God's people have said from generations to generations great is the faithfulness of our Lord 1 Chronicles 16:34 give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his steadfast love endures forever as we just sang great is thy faithfulness O Lord from generation to generation the Lord will prepare your soul for his second coming by magnifying to you God's covenant faithfulness there are many more generations we don't know how many and every generation can attest since Adam and Eve until Christ's second coming God is faithful to his promises and he will cause you to trust him and magnify him no matter what happens in the world and you will be ready for his second coming well the fifth and final observation from this text is that the

Holy Spirit prepares you for Christ's next coming by stirring your soul to worship the Holy Spirit prepares you for Christ by stirring your soul to worship there are four songs recorded for us for us in Luke 1 and 2 and what we see in each one is the same thing that there is only one fitting response when the Spirit causes you to realize that Christ came to save you and it's you worship the first song is that the news that Christ was coming to be incarnate in Mary and she says her soul swelled in worship in verse 46 my soul magnifies the Lord my spirit rejoices in God my Savior Mary's response was worship the second song you can see it too in Luke chapter 1 verse 78 would you look there Zacharias

Elizabeth's husband worships God the Lord opens his lips and what comes out is a song of praise Luke 1:78 the day spring from on high has visited us to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace Zacharias responds in worship number three it's Luke chapter 2 verse 7 when Mary gave birth to her firstborn son as she was

wrapping him in swaddling clothes and was lying him in a manger in Luke chapter 2 verse 14 the host of angels exploded in worship I think they were observing and worshiping from heaven and the Lord allowed these shepherds to behold heaven from where they were and the angels have been wondering how is it that

[39 : 49] God is going to accomplish all that he's promised how will it be and when Christ is born God the son in the flesh to fulfill all righteousness and save his people the angels burst into worship glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men in whom his favor rests and then the fourth song it comes from Simeon in Luke chapter 2 verses 30 and 31 and it's at the sight of Jesus Simeon rests in joyful worship he says my eyes have seen your salvation God which you have prepared before the face of all peoples Simeon responds in worship dear brothers and sisters dear friends Christ came as he said he would

Christ will come again as he said he would the only fitting response for us is to worship him and rest in that comfortable dependence on the Holy Spirit to prepare us for his coming let's pray for your church why did not try or neither know you this place in■ or