

Blessed Is She Who Believed

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[0 : 00] Let's go a little to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1, we read it, verse 45.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on 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 for those who fear him from generation to generation. Now this chapter tells us about the heavenly visitor that came to Mary with the news, the most amazing news, that she was the one that God had chosen to bear the Son of God in human nature.

And of course we know that although Mary was a wonderful woman, and somebody that was set apart by the Lord for this amazing privilege and amazing favour, Mary was a sinner, same as anybody else.

[1 : 33] Because, we'll see that in a moment, she talks about God as her Saviour. So that the son that she was carrying was to be both her son and her Saviour.

And the whole thing really is quite remarkable. And I think we've said it often enough before, that maybe we're guilty for not recognising just what a wonderful woman Mary actually was.

Because sometimes maybe we've avoided this in case we'd thought of giving her an undue or a wrong position.

Mary, of course, shouldn't be set on a pedestal any more than anybody else. Mary is not to be worshipped and Mary is not to be prayed to. But Mary was, for all that, a wonderful woman of faith. Because if you put yourself in that position where this announcement comes, and you're at a stage like that, you're on your own, you're not married, and you're told that not only you're going to have a son, but that it's going to be the Son of God.

[2 : 47] To have the faith and the humility and the submission before God to take all that on board just shows really what an amazing woman she actually was.

So Mary, of course, receives this quite extraordinary, extraordinary news. Mary would have been probably very late teens.

That tended to be the time when Jewish women at that time got married. So, of course, we know that she was, what we would term today, engaged to Joseph.

But at this particular point, she was still, and in marriage, was still a virgin. And, of course, this news has come. And she asks the question, the obvious question, as to how this was to happen.

And she was told that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her. And what was to happen was really quite remarkable, because the Lord Jesus, who was born of a woman, born of Mary, he was made of her substance.

[3 : 52] He was formed in the woman the same way that any baby is formed of her. And yet, he was kept free from all defilement and all sin.

Because we've got to remember that we are sinners through and through. David in Psalm 51 talks about us being conceived in sin, that we go wrong in the womb. You know, some people have the idea that babies are absolutely innocent.

Well, they're not. Because, yes, I know that the Lord can deal savingly, and has dealt savingly with a child in the womb.

He did that with John the Baptist. He set apart Jeremiah. He set apart John the Baptist from that stage. And we believe that the Lord has and does deal in that way.

But the thing is that the sin that is part and partial of our being is in us, in our mother's womb. And that's why David says that in Psalm 51, that he was seeing the twistedness of who he was.

[4 : 57] And he traces it right back. And he says, right at the very beginning, I was wrong. Right from my mother's womb, I was wrong. But Jesus was different. Although he was made of the substance of Mary from the human part, yet he was kept free from all.

The body was kept free from all defilement of sin. Of course, his body was the same as it had to be. The same as yours and mine. In that it was a body that could die.

It was a body that would feel. A body that was absolutely human. And yet it was kept free from all defilement and sin. And so the whole thing is, as the Bible says, great is the mystery of godliness. Christ manifests in the flesh. It's a mystery. And sometimes people will say, do you believe that? And we say, yes, absolutely. So how? We don't know.

But faith. This is what faith is. Faith lays hold of it and believes God's word. We believe it. We know it's true. It's as true. Even although we cannot understand it, we know the truth of it all.

[6 : 07] And we lay our very lives upon this truth. And so Mary has received this wonderful news. And so she goes down to see Elizabeth, her cousin.

And we find them rejoicing together. And you know, there's something beautiful in that. And you know, when the Lord deals, because the Lord has dealt favorably with both Elizabeth and with Mary.

And here are two women who are rejoicing. And you know, I think it's a great thing when the Lord deals favorably with us. That we don't keep it to ourselves. That we should rejoice with others. We should tell others when God has done a great thing. Not in a way of boasting. But in a way of acknowledging God and giving glory to God. And particularly if we can go to those who can identify to a certain extent with our news.

In the same way as maybe when we have bad news and when we go through a difficult experience. It always helps when we're with people who know where we're at.

[7 : 14] Who can identify with what we're going through. And so it is at the other side. People who can maybe identify with our joy. And so it's a beautiful picture of Mary and Elizabeth coming together.

To rejoice together with what God is doing for them. And you know, there's great faith in both these ladies. And you know, there's a little picture almost of heaven here.

Because this is part of what the saints in glory will be doing. We'll be rejoicing together in the Lord. So that these moments when we have a rejoicing together here in this world.

In faith. Because of who God is. And what God does. This is, as it were, almost like a little foretaste of glory itself.

And so as we say, Mary and Elizabeth are together. And then Elizabeth says, Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

[8 : 22] Blessed is she that believed. And you know, that's a wonderful statement. Because you know, that is one of the most beautiful statements that anybody could make.

You know, people sometimes wonder. And say, I wonder what I would like to have on my tombstone. When I die, what would I like to have written? Well, you know this. I don't know that you could have something much nicer than that.

Blessed, or you could say, is the one who believed. Blessed is the one who believed. Blessed is the one who believed.

The blessing there is in believing. That is the only thing that is going to be of ultimate value and worth from this world. Is that we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so there will be an eternal blessing. Maybe there are days you struggle here in this world. But you know, the glory that will come from this believing is beyond even our comprehension tonight.

[9 : 55] So here it says, blessed is she that believed. And then we have Mary's song. Now we're not going to go through it. Just to look at, highlight two or three things just at the very beginning of what is known as the Magnificat.

And Mary begins by saying, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. And again, as we said earlier on, Mary is highlighting the fact that the Lord is her Saviour.

And as we said, that shows that Mary was just a saved sinner. Just like you and just like me. But somebody who was so favoured of the Lord.

And although she was favoured of the Lord, we've got to remember that a sword. And you know, you often find that. Where there's great blessing, there's often a sword in this world.

Because that's the nature of this world. And Mary, Simeon remembers how Simeon gave that. But later on, he was to give that, that a sword would push into her own soul, into her own heart.

[11:08] And there were times, and that was her experience. Right to the very cross. Where she looked on the son that she brought into this world. The son that she had nursed and brought up.

And seeing him hanging there. And yet, her faith. I wonder, I would love to know just what Mary's faith was like at that particular moment. As she looked on her son, hanging on the cross.

Did she have the faith of Mary of Bethany at that time? Because remember, Mary of Bethany had recognised that Jesus, that's why she had anointed him in light of his burial.

Her faith was so vibrant, so powerful, so great. She knew what Peter and John weren't able to understand. I wonder if Mary, the mother of Jesus, was able, in the midst of all her own personal agony and grief.

And yet we know how tender Jesus was on the cross. He was even there making provision for her. Where he put her into the care of John, the disciple.

[12:14] The disciple whom Jesus loved. But back here, Mary is recognising. And she's giving thanks for God. And that's a lovely expression.

God, my Saviour. And you know, that's what we must do tonight as well. Let's give thanks for God, our Saviour. Do we really give thanks and thank him over and over and over again?

Because she's saying, For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. And behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed.

Because what Mary is doing is she cannot get over how the Lord chose her out of all. And recognised the blessing that was to come upon her.

But you know, the Lord has chosen us as well. There are millions in this world that he hasn't. But he has chosen us.

[13:14] He chose you. He set his love upon you from all eternity. He came into this world to die for you. Because he loved you so much. And as a marvel, we cannot get our head round that.

But you know, we should so often stop and thank the Lord and say, Lord, I thank you with all my heart. That you chose me from before the foundation of the world.

And that you had a purpose and a plan for my life. And you have measured my days. And you know exactly the day that you're going to take me out of this world.

I don't know it. Nobody knows it. But you know it. There's no accidents with the Lord. Everything is perfectly ordered and ordained. And so we should give him thanks.

I can't even begin to imagine how people cope when they do not have the Lord. When they push God out of the picture. Because life is full of random accidents and random events.

[14:19] And nothing makes sense. But when the Lord is at the heart of our life. We understand that he's in absolute sovereign control of everything.

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge. So Mary is giving the Lord great thanks. And so should we. We should be in the habit of thanking the Lord.

We have so much to thank the Lord for. Because when you think of. As we sang there in Psalm 92. To render thanks unto the Lord.

It is a comely thing. And so every day we should thank the Lord for temporal and spiritual blessings. Thank him that he took us from a fearful pit and miry clay.

And he set our feet upon a rock establishing our way. Do we thank the Lord for his patience with us? I can't get over the Lord's patience with me.

[15:18] Day after day. And week after week. And month after month. And year after year. Day after week. We're so slow to learn. We're so stubborn.

We're so prone to going back. To what he has shown us is wrong. And he's shown us the right way. This is the way. Walk ye in it. And you start walking there.

And then your feet slide. And you slip. And you wander. And you go back. And he takes. He goes. And he takes you. And he leads you on again. His patience is quite extraordinary.

Do we give him thanks for that? For his patience? For his love?

The love that upholds us. And the love that keeps us? You know we're being kept. Every single day. Kept by the power of God.

[16:16] The very word has the idea of guarding. That the Lord has put a guard around us. And every day. And every night. We can't look after ourselves.

But we're there. And even if. Do you know the wonderful thing is. If in Jesus Christ. And the Lord was to take us through the night. In our sleep. The fact that we're. We're out of it.

At that particular moment. And just. Taken. He's in control. Our soul will be transported.

Immediately into glory. Into his presence.

All the time. He's watching over us. And he gives us his wisdom to guide us. And so often. We're needing that guidance. Aren't we?

We don't know which way to go. We don't know what to do. So often in life. We're wondering what to do. I've said it before. I remember. Once I. When I remember leaving home.

[17:11] And working out. Deciding. Well this is what I'm away to. To Glasgow. To study. And I thought. Oh well that's. That's my decisions over in life. And maybe. Later on. I'll make a decision.

Who I'm going to marry. And that's it. You to think. Life was as simple as that. Couple of decisions. My job. And. And a wife. And that'll it. That'll do. Every single moment.

Every day. We've got decisions to make. And we find. So often. We're saying. The Lord. Lord.

Please help me. Guide me. May your light.

Be a lamp. To my. To my feet. Show me the way to go. I don't know what to do here. Lord. How often. We come to situations. And we're not sure.

Just what is the right thing to do. Lord. Keep me back. Or Lord. Take me on. For so often. We're depending. Upon him. All the time.

[18:07] Do we thank him. For his great promises. You think. Think back. Over your life. To the many promises. That God has given you. That you. These.

These promises. Have been a pillow. For your head. At night. And they have been a rock. For your feet. On the road. During the day. So often.

God's word. You've had it in the morning. And there it is. It nourishes you. It guides you. This word. This word is life to you. This word is.

It's more precious than gold. There have been periods in your life. And you're saying. Lord. There is nothing in this whole world. That will satisfy me right now.

Like getting your word. Because this. When you get the word of the Lord. And you get the faith. To lay hold upon it. Into your heart. It brings an energy.

[19:04] A strength. An assurance. A persuasion. A knowledge. That you wouldn't. You wouldn't change. For all the wealth of the world.

Is to have. This. From the Lord. And so we should be. Constantly. Praising him. And thanking him. Thanking him for all the material benefits. That we have.

The homes we have. We have a lovely bed. To go to at night. We're not in cardboard boxes. Loads of people tonight. And they're just sleeping. Sleeping under the.

Sleeping under the. With. With. If they've got a blanket. They're lucky. Doorways in the cities. Are full of people. Just lying there. Do we thank the Lord.

For the bed we have. For the. Comforts that we have. All these. Great material blessings. And then. Mary moves from. From herself.

[20:01] And she's looking at. What God is doing. In a more. More general way. And she says. That his. His mercy. Verse 50. And his mercy. Is for those who fear him.

From generation. To generation. Isn't that wonderful. His. Mercies are new. Every morning. Wouldn't it be awful. If God's mercy. Ran out. Imagine if the Lord.

Says. I'm sorry. I have no more mercy. To give you. Wouldn't that be a fearful. Declaration. That would come. But no. It'll never come.

You see. We have a full word here. The word that is given to us. Here is complete. It's not going to be added to. This is a word that will. Last as long as life remains.

In this world. Until the last of God's people. Is taken. And that. Much of God's word. Will be fulfilled. Throughout an endless eternity. So many of the promises.

[20:56] Are. Pertaining to glory. But. All the time. You see. There's this. Mercy.

That is given to us. The. From. His mercy. Is for those who fear him. From generation. To generation. Isn't that. Isn't that wonderful. And then.

We see that. God. In his sovereign power. That he turns things. Upside down. He scattered the proud. In the thoughts. Of their heart.

He's brought down. The mighty. From their thrones. And exhorted those. Of. Of humble estate. And filled the hungry. With good things. And you know.

God's righteous judgments. Are amazing to watch. Because sometimes. You can go on. For years. And years. And you see those. Who. Think nothing. Of the Lord.

[21 : 52] And they're going up. And they're going up. And they're going up. What one day. They will come crashing down. And we see those. Who have walked humbly. With the Lord. And in due time.

He will exalt them. You see the Lord. He is a righteous judge. And he will do. What is right. And this is what Mary.

Is so convinced of. And this is why. She gives him. So much thanks. And praise. And so should we. The personal. But also. Her heart moves out.

Into the general. And moves from generation. To generation. And so. Should we. How thankful. We are tonight. That we are able.

To praise. This living. And through God. Let us pray. Lord our God. We pray. That you will indeed. Bless us. And we give thanks. For. All for your patience. And your grace.

[22 : 48] Your mercy. And your truth. To us. We give thanks. Oh Lord. That. You are. Guiding us. Day by day. That your word. Says.

I will instruct you. And teach you. In the way. That you will go. I will guide you. With mine eye. And we give thanks. Oh Lord. That we are being led. By you. We are being led.

By you. In this world. And we will also. Be led by you. In the world to come. Because it is. In the world to come. That the lamb. Will continue. To feed. And to lead.

His people. Throughout an endless. Eternity. And so. We pray. For the faith. That. That lays hold. Upon you. And we pray. Lord. That you will strengthen us.

So often. We feel weak. And we feel vulnerable. And so. We pray. To bless those. Who are. Who are struggling. In life. We pray for those. Lord. Who have.

[23 : 43] Health issues. Who maybe have received. Bad news. Lord. We pray. That you will be with them. And that you will bless them. And we pray. Lord. That you will bring back.

Returning health. You are the God. The great physician. Who you are able to do. Far and beyond. Anything that we could ask. Or think. Help us to trust in you. We pray. Lord.

For those who are downcast. And those who are struggling. Bless them. We pray. Bless all whom we love. Our homes. Our families. Take care of each one. And forgive us our sin.

In Jesus name. Amen.