

The Joy that Lies in Christmas

Series: Encountering Jesus (through the Gospel of Luke)
Brad Bailey – December 16, 2018

Luke 1:39-40

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

Luke 1:41-45

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

The joy of Christmas is not dependent on our _____.

The joy of Christmas does not come from mere _____.

The joy of Christmas is not related to our _____.

The joy of Christmas is not found in what's _____ or _____, rather in a new life that has begun _____.

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. - Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. - John 15:10-11

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. - John 17:13

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Intro

I find that Christmas is like an **array of sentiments... loosened and longing for their substance.**

So this season can be a process of **finding our way back to Christmas.**

And towards that end, we have **begun a journey in the Gospel of Luke...** to know Jesus. And because Luke **includes accounts that prepare the way** for the birth of Christ...we get something of a **“Christmas prequel.”** We have an opportunity for God to speak and reveal more of His work to us as He did those first engaged...and to prepare our hearts...as He did theirs. [1]

(Summarize previous weeks...)

By way of quick review of what Luke has shared. Luke begins his account by introducing us to an older couple...Zechariah & Elizabeth... sadly unable to have ever conceived children. And one day Zechariah is engaged by an angel... told they will have a son...and he will be the prophet who prepares the way for the Messiah...he one God will send to save all people. They were told to name him John...and we will come to know him as John the Baptist ...the one who calls the people to repent and prepare their lives to receive the Messiah...and then introduces them to Jesus.

Luke continues telling us that six month later... a young woman...named Mary is engaged by an angel... told that she will be with child... and will have a son...and he will be the Messiah...conceived by God’s Spirit. Mary asks...how is this possible...because she has never had sexual relationship with a man...and she is told that God’s Spirit will conceive this child in her...and then the last thing that Mary was told...is that her relative Elizabeth is now pregnant in her old age...for nothing is impossible with God.

Luke now continues...

Luke 1:39-40

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

We shouldn’t be surprised that she prepares to **go spend some time away.**

An unmarried pregnant girl like Mary was in **real danger** from **outraged relatives**, and Elizabeth’s house may have been a **safe haven for the young girl.** [2]

Perhaps the visit was a way of getting her out of harm’s way. Honor killings are not a modern invention. This is certainly suggested by the fact that we are later told that Mary stayed with her for the next 3 months until the time came for Elizabeth’s child was born.

We shouldn't be surprised that she goes specifically to **visit her cousin Elizabeth**. The **angels had told her**... that her relative Elizabeth was also with child at an impossible age. So Elizabeth is the one who would **conform this**...and **understand this**... and maybe even help **prepare for this**.

Imagine...these two women who were pregnant... each told they were the one's chosen by god to bring the hope that been had been longed for... for hundreds of years. That all had been wondering and waiting for.

They were relatives... but separated by many days of travel...and by generations. One's in **youth group** and one is in the **"Grays and Strays" group**...living **Leisure World**. Elizabeth is old enough to be **Mary's great-grandmother**.

And yet God spans and unites these generations.

That itself is beautiful...and **should inspire us**. In a time in which so much tries to separate us... set generations apart...these events of Christmas give us a beautiful picture of how things really are. God sees human lives who share the same nature... able to come together around what is bigger than either of their generations.

We could wonder which got more out of this time of coming together.

The older Elizabeth...now with a husband who was made unable to talk by the angel until their child was born... a woman who we are told had drawn into seclusion... finally able to enjoy a safe companion...and the vitality of this younger relative...finally able to know that indeed the Messiah has been conceived as well. Or the young 13 to 15 year old Mary... scared... one whose fiancé was preparing for divorce...she is needing support....wisdom. I think it is safe to say... **this time was a gift to each of them.**

She didn't want to waste any time.

And so she arrives at Elizabeth's house, greets her, and, then, what happens?

Luke 1:41-45

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

What a moment of affirmation.

Something remarkable happens within Elizabeth...the child leapt.

This isn't just a cute "I felt the baby kick" moment. It's God's Spirit at work.

Elizabeth had been told something about this child...

"...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." - Luke 1:15

The child who is in Elizabeth's womb is a prophet ... the one who was to come prepare the way for the Messiah...the Savior.

Not yet born, John already prophesies. In his mother's womb he's **already pointing** to the Savior! That's exactly what John does. [3]

Quite specifically...he leapt **for joy.**

The life that was coming into the world... brings joy.

Christmas bears joy...right into a world that may seem hard and hopeless...comes joy. That is what heaven is bringing.

The Spirit breaks forth an inner joy in Elizabeth...and then Mary.

And Mary is so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she breaks out in song—a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat.

You may think that **the first Christmas song** was "The Chipmunks Christmas song", "I saw Santa kissing mommy", "Grandma got run over by a reindeer"... or maybe you know that the real Christmas hymns are Silent Night, Hark the Herald Angels Sing... but the truly **first song of Christmas** is composed in the words of Mary.

Mary magnified. Joining the rich tradition of poets and prophets, Mary composes a song of devotion to her Lord in Luke 1:46-55

Luke 1:46-55 (NIV)

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

Mary says her spirit “rejoices”... she breaks out in joy. The life inside her is a declaration that God does indeed come and set things right ... and indeed has come to her. [4]

These two women had believed God...but in this moment... they are realizing how real it is...and the Holy Spirit is filling them with joy.

And Mary’s words are prophetic. What she declares is really profound if we stand back and consider it. She is just a 15 year old girl... sitting in a small backwards village of a people occupied by the Roman empire. She says...

“His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.” – Luke 1:50
Does her God really offer a mercy that will extend for generations to come? Stop and look around...**here we are** generations later.

“He has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed..” – Luke 1:48

Sure young girls had hoped that maybe they would be the one to bring the Messiah into the world. But would people really know who she is? Stop and look... here we are generations later... looking at the blessing that was with her. There may be more paintings of her hanging in more museums around the world than any other figure other than her son. Her picture is on the cover of cards being sent all around the world even now.

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble”. – Luke 1:52

Stop and look... **the proud are always brought down...and the humble lifted up.** [5]

But HOW this joy is arising in her is insightful. What she actually says at the start is that her spirit is leading her soul. The accurate translation ...

Luke 1:46-47 (NKJV)

*Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit **has** rejoiced in God my Savior.*

In other words, her soul magnifies God, because her spirit has **already** rejoiced in God. A spirit that rejoices in God leads to a soul that magnifies God.

The **soul** refers to our **inner self**, our emotional center (Psa. 6:3; 10:3). It is through our souls that we relate personally and emotionally with other people.

But the **spirit** is altogether different. The spirit is not our emotional side. It is the **side of us that relates to God. Joy is being experienced in her spirit. That is where the joy of Christmas can be experienced in each of us.**

Her song seems to end... a little abruptly. But it was **just the beginning.**

It continues in all who receive this new life from God and in God.

Joy has come to us all.

When the angel appears to the shepherds. The angel said to them:

*The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of **great joy** that will be **for all the people**. - Luke 2:10*

For all the people. Consider that for a moment.

The joy of Christmas is not dependent on our personality.

I think **many people** feel that joy...happiness...is simply something they can never know...because they **don't have a disposition** for it. It's just **not their personality**.

I have no doubt **many right here**... have **known depression** that seems to overtake you.

There is **something more here** than **disposition...** or **moods**.

The **child who leapt** was the one who would grow up to be known as **John the Baptist**. We get a pretty good look at his disposition...and one would **not call it cheery**.

He has been **set apart as a prophet...never to consume alcohol**. He lives in the **desert...**

wearing rough animal skins...eating locusts... coming out to call people to repent in the harshest of terms. It would be fair to say that he was one of those "serious" types.

Yet this is a joy that reaches him...that works within him. I believe that can be good news to many here. Realize that there is nothing about John's personality that keeps him from knowing the unique joy of Christmas. [5b]

The joy of Christmas does not come from mere outward religion.

Social research does continue to show that people who are more actively consistent in religious devotion **report being happier**. They have **more purpose**. More **community**. More **hope**. But such inner qualities do **not simply from mere ritual itself...but rather from** what they believe...and seek...and experience.

Elizabeth and Mary are devoted women of God. But the joy that had come to them... was not simply the result of their religious devotion or activity.

The simple truth is that **many people have religion...but they don't have God**.

You can have religion...without God. The religious leaders had even become good at it. They were in charge. Mary...and all those receiving the joy of Christmas...were not those who controlled anything. It was God who was in control... not merely their religious activities. The joy of Christmas comes from His work...His Spirit invading us.

The joy of Christmas is not related to our circumstances.

The joy that these women knew... that comes in Christ... is **clearly not because** all their **circumstances changed**.

For Elizabeth... sure there was joy in having a child when you have felt cursed as a barren woman for so many years. But I think we may simplify our view of how this effected her life. When most would have born children around the age of fifteen... having a child miraculously at her age of 70 doesn't make everything right. 55 years of social shame is nearly a lifetime...it's a part of her life...and who knows how strangely she will be looked at now....as an elderly woman who shouldn't even be able to have a child.

Mary's life was now torn apart. Pregnant before her wedding... meant her parents would disown her...her fiancé is preparing for divorce...and the whole community could stone her to death.

And both of these sons would face a **spiritual conflict** that these mothers **could only vaguely feel in their deep maternal nature**. They have known that there is an enemy of God...and they are **now Ground Zero in the bull's eye** of spiritual warfare. Ultimately, both sons would be killed because of the role they would fulfill in God's plan.

John would be beheaded for **speaking the truth**; **Jesus** would be **crucified** for **being the Truth**.

The joy of Christmas is not related to our circumstances.

This is really freeing to know. It's natural to find a TYPE of joy and happiness from what we are experiencing around us. But it is always going to be limited. There is no gift...no party...that can stay with us.

Joy... happiness. These are what we naturally want ...and such a significant part of what Christmas can hope for. **We say "Merry Christmas"**... and how fitting that we do... but it can so easily speak only of something **sentimental and short lived. Merriment is momentary**... something we work up. And we all know that easily it eludes us...or how quickly it evaporates. Dissipates.

We become happy because circumstances are positive, but when they're not, the happiness is gone.

The simple truth is that....

The joy of Christmas is not found in what's happening around us or to us, rather in a new life that has begun within us.

Deep and abiding joy is found in the unchanging source of all perfection...all love, beauty, and rightness. Deep and abiding joy is found in God.

As the Psalmist said:

Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

True happiness begins and ends with God.

In the beginning, it is **God's pleasure that creates** the universe...the **overflow of delight** that exists in the eternal community of **Father, Son, and Spirit**.

The ultimate source of all love... beauty...and rightness is God. [6]

And when Creation became separated from God... it left the human soul with only echoes looking for the original sound...only sentiments of love, beauty, and rightness...looking for their substance. But now God has entered to bring His life to indwell once again. He came to bear that separation in Christ...and to indwell all who would receive him.

Even when our soul may feel the effects of this world...our spirit can know of another world that prevails.

Mary knows that no matter what natural feelings she may have in relationship to relating to this world...a new life was now alive in her... in her spirit. The joy of Christmas...lies in the new presence of God within her...in her spirit.

This is what we see in Jesus himself. We are told he was a man "acquainted with sorrows"... for her faced and felt the pain of this world...YET he said he came to share his eternal JOY.

John 15:10-11

*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this **so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.***

John 17:13

*"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, **so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.***

What is he saying? There are **two realms**. He is **bringing his connection** to another realm...an eternal unchanging realm in which all that that we long for... perfect love...and joy...is also made real.

It is not a matter of rejecting this world's pleasures...it's finding that there is a joy that transcends them.

Closing:

At Christmas... we may naturally feel the sentiments of family...of belonging...of home. And rightfully so. But they are but a sentiment of sign of a home we are now a part of.

As Jonathan Edwards described...

"The enjoyment of [God] is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied.... Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends are but shadows, but enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean." [7]

When we were kids... Christmas was all about gifts. What were going to get? Perhaps... still stirs a bit. But as we get older... we begin to realize that **everything we get can be enjoyed...but nothing we get will make us happy. And the great news is that the real gift of Christmas is a happiness within us. It is a connection with heaven. "for God so loved the world that he GAVE his son...that whoever believes would never perish...but have eternal life."**

Closing Prayer:

Invitation... to receive that source of joy. Someone once gave a simple acrostic using J.O.Y. The 'J' represents Jesus, the 'Y' stands for You, and the 'O' signifies zero or nothing. Joy is found when "nothing" comes between "Jesus" and "You."

Opportunity to invite God's Spirit to commune with our own spirits. Now take a moment... and just allow your spirit to quietly enjoy the presence of God's unchanging...unending sources of happiness.

Enjoy the presence of his perfect Love

Grasp what heaven offers in the perfection of beauty.

Let your heart know that you are a citizen of a world of perfect peace and rightness.

Closing Songs (options):

Joy to the World

Resources: Meditation on the Magnificent by John Piper; Derek Melanson message, An Impossible Joy (Jan 16, 2007); That Your Joy May Be Full: A THEOLOGY OF HAPPINESS Article by Scott Swain (April 23, 2018) <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/that-your-joy-may-be-full>

Notes:

1. It's helpful to remember that these elements that prepare the way of Christ's birth, which more may treat as mere religious legend, are actually what Luke deemed the facts he wanted to include. His introductory words clearly value the facts "from the beginning."

*"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.³ Therefore, since I myself have **carefully investigated everything from the beginning**, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."* - Luke 1:1-4

2. Mary traveling to the "hills of Judea" is a journey easy to identify. However the actual town in which Zechariah and Elizabeth lives is more left to tradition. My minimal search came across the following:

<https://www.itsgila.com/elizabeth.htm>

<https://biblewalks.com/sites/Visitation.html>

A video of this scene created by the LDS can be found here -

<https://mormonsoprano.com/2011/12/13/the-magificat-mary-and-elisabeth-in-film/>

3. The church fathers used to say that John is the only child who ever turned his mother's womb into a pulpit.

4. John Piper summarizes the message and meaning of Mary's song well:

"What fills Mary's heart with joy is that God loves to undertake for the underdog who calls on his mercy. She mentions this three times: verse 50, "He has mercy on those who fear him"; verse 52, "He has exalted those of low degree"; verse 53, "He has filled the hungry with good things." That's one side of God's holiness. The other side is that God opposes and abases the haughty. Mary mentions this three times also: verse 51, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"; verse 52, "He has put down the mighty from their thrones"; verse 53, "The rich he has sent away empty."

It is clear from Mary's words (and from the whole Bible) that God is not partial to the rich, the powerful, or the proud. How could God be partial to the things which in our world are, more often than not, substitutes for God rather than pointers to God?

Vast numbers of people have perished because they were enamored by pride, power, and wealth. And probably Theophilus, as a ranking Roman official, has all three. So Mary's Magnificat is not just recorded out of pure antiquarian interest. There is a word of warning and of salvation here. Theophilus, look at what God is really like. He is not the least impressed by any of your pride, power, or opulence. He has mercy on those who fear him, who humble themselves and turn from the ego boosting accumulation of wealth to the lowliness of self-denial for the sake of others. This is the way God is, Theophilus. This is how his holiness expresses itself. Does this not

commend itself as true, that the great and holy God should magnify his greatness by blessing the lowly who admire his greatness and by abasing the haughty who resent his greatness?

“He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

The thought describes the future work of God’s Son as continuing God’s past work. As God did in the past, He will do again in the work of His Son. God’s arm represents His might or strength. It can be used to strongly support and uphold. It can also be used to scatter, bring down and drive out (Deut. 4:34; 9:10; Ps. 34:15; 44:3; 89:13; 118:15). In God’s time He supports the faithful humble and frustrates the proud.

The “proud” are those who do not fear God (v. 50), who are not hungry for God’s righteousness (v. 53), nor afflicted (vv. 48, 52). He stands against the proud to overturn their political power and position. The Salvation Jesus brings to the humble will also bring judgment to the proud (6:20-26).

The innermost thought or thoughts of the heart describes the hidden place or center of a person’s reasoning power. The hidden imaginations of our heart reveal our true self, which is opened before God’s all-seeing eyes. [He will see to it that the proud of heart will not attain unity of purpose or comradeship.]

The contrast between the humble and the haughty continues in verse 52. “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

The Old Testament taught Mary that sooner or later God acts upon one’s innermost attitude to bring about a reversal of prospects or futures (Job 12:19; 1 Sam. 2:7; Ps. 147:6; Lk. 10:13-15; 14:11; 16:19-31; 18:14). God dethrones autocratic rulers (ἄδιÜóôçò, from where our word dynasty comes). Though He may do it through secondary cause, He is the primary reason they are brought down before they do irreparable damage.

Bless God that the reverse is also true. God pays careful loving attention to the humble, raising them up to new positions of significance before Him (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:28). Mary is deeply conscious of the fact. For God’s exalting is clearly seen in the choice of Mary to be the mother of His Son.

[Contrasting parallelism is used here: brought down ruler, exalted humble; filled hungry, emptied rich.]

Verse 53 proclaims God’s concern for the spiritually hungry. “He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed.

This verse reflects the OT (1 Sam. 2:5; Ps. 72:11; 107:9) hope of vindication for following the Lord, but again it foreshadows Jesus’ ministry (Lk. 6:21, 24-26; 11:5-13; 16:19-31; 21:1-4).

Both the Old and New Covenants recognizes God’s desire to satisfy the spiritually hunger who trust in Him (Isa. 55:1-2; Amos 8:11; Mt. 5:6; Jn. 6:35, 48). [This is not to say that God does not care for the physically hungry (1 Sam 21:1-6; Mt. 12:1-8; 1 Kgs 17:1-16; 19:5-8; 2 Kgs 4:42-44; Ps. 37:25), but that He wants to fill with something more sustaining than physical food.]

The proud, the powerful and the rich are those pursuing their own purpose and even against the purposes of God. They are empty though they be full of all the world offers (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).”

5. The Scriptures reflect God’s connection to humility throughout.

It is reflected in the very nature of Christ entering the world.

Philippians 2:6-11 (NIV)

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And the idea of God blessing those who are humble is brought about by the Apostle James who said James 4:10 (NIV)

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

5b. The nature of King David offers a similar quality to reflect upon. If one reads the Psalms, they will discover many written by David reflect all the symptoms of depression...

despondent...unable to sleep and eat at time... filled with questions that plague him...YET also speaking of a joy that is at work in him.

6. In regards to the natural effects of this world, consider

“The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but ... merriment He has scattered broadcast. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”

-C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, Ch 7, p. 115

"Blessed are the POOR IN SPIRIT, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who MOURN, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:3-4

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been GROANING AS IN THE PAINS OF CHILDBIRTH right up to the present time. Not only so, but WE OURSELVES, WHO HAVE THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, GROAN INWARDLY as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, THE

SPIRIT HELPS us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Romans 8:18-26

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile WE GROAN, LONGING TO BE CLOTHED WITH OUR HEAVENLY DWELLING, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us THE SPIRIT AS A DEPOSIT, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

"The tragedy of the world is that the echo is mistaken for the Original Shout. When our back is to the breathtaking beauty of God, we cast a shadow on the earth and fall in love with it. But it does not satisfy.".....John Piper

7. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), Citation: Heartcry! Issue 26, 2003