

God's Big Announcement Series

Jesus Brings Good Benefits (Lk. 1:46-55)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus Brings Good Benefits

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Mackinac Island

1. Most of us probably feel as if times of genuine and satisfying experiences of happiness don't happen often enough even when we work hard at trying to create these types of experiences. While we enjoy many good experiences they don't seem to reach deep enough into our soul to satisfy. Life moments when our hearts are full, we are fully present in the situation we are in, we aren't thinking or worrying about anything else, and we want to stay right where we are seem all too rare. Usually, we desire these moments to last longer and they come to an end all too quickly. As the saying goes, "Time flies when you're having fun." Or more accurately, "Time flies when you are happy." like the happy man described in Ecclesiastes 5:18-20. All of us seek to be kept busy with the joy of our heart.
 2. Sometimes there are seasons of life full of happiness and joy. One of the most satisfying seasons in my life when this happened began the day of Mandi and I's wedding. Our wedding day was a great day. Then, we spent two weeks of great happiness on our honeymoon to Mackinac Island as we began and started to develop our life together as a married couple. After the honeymoon, we moved in together and adapted to our normal life as a married couple. This season of life was great! It was wonderful! It was oozing happiness.
 3. This was a season of life when my soul was full of happiness. I was completely satisfied. The happiness I experienced didn't quickly fade away and vanish as soon as an enjoyable activity was over. This season provided a type of happiness that satisfied in a way that other forms of happiness don't.
 4. When was the last time you were overflowing with happiness? This is not a time when you enjoyed yourself or thought you had a fun experience. Rather, when was your soul satisfied and your heart was bursting with happiness? Have you felt that level of happiness? Do you think this type of happiness can be experienced on a regular basis?
- B. In Luke 1:46-55, we can learn how to experience great happiness in a regular and consistent way. By learning from and following Mary's example, we can foster a healthy relationship with God that has a significantly positive impact on our emotions. Jesus says He desires to give us this type of happiness, a happiness that is full and satisfying (Jn. 15:11, 16:24). There is a source of happiness that can give us this type of happiness on a regular basis that does not depend on our circumstances. Although this might sound too good to be true, it's real and those who have walked with Jesus for a long time experience it regularly.

II. Mary's Reaction

- A. After God's big announcement about the birth of Jesus through the angel Gabriel, Mary immediately went to see her relative Elizabeth to confirm the message she heard (Lk. 1:39-40). As Mary discovered barren Elizabeth was indeed pregnant, the Holy Spirit empowered Mary to respond to her own pregnancy the way God wants all people to respond. Apparently, at some

point between receiving the message about Jesus' birth and arriving to visit Elizabeth Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth appears to speak to Mary as if she is currently pregnant.¹ As Mary observed the confirmation and sign provided by God about her pregnancy, she rejoiced in the work God was doing in her life.

- B. Here is how Mary reacted to her pregnancy,

⁴⁶ And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (Lk. 1:46-47)

- C. This response to Jesus is motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.² Mary is responding to the birth of Jesus in a supernatural way. She has insight into how the birth of Jesus will impact her own reputation in future generations—something she could only know if she was divinely inspired to make the statements she is making ("from now on all generations will call me blessed", v. 48).³ Mary having insight into the fact that Jesus' birth is a fulfillment of promises made to Abraham is more evidence that Mary is speaking by the Holy Spirit here ("Just as He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever", v. 55). Mary is speaking by the Holy Spirit here just as her relative Elizabeth did (Lk. 1:41-45). This theme of divine utterance is continued and assumed by Mary. Through Mary, we are getting a divine commentary on the birth of Jesus. Luke is convincing us that God is directly and heavily involved in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.
- D. What is a divinely inspired and empowered response to the birth of Jesus? Mary holds God in greater esteem because of what He is doing and providing through Jesus ("My soul exalts the Lord", v. 46).⁴ To exalt God is to enlarge or expand our attitude of admiration and respect for God. Think of the children's toys that grow and develop a particular shape when submerged in water. These water growing toys enlarge and expand when exposed to water. Or perhaps we can compare this growing admiration for God through the Grinch's heart growing three sizes. Falling in love and experiencing deepening feelings could be another image. For the disciple, our admiration for God enlarges and expands when we consider and understand the works of God. The more we understand of God and His actions the greater our love and affection for Him becomes. The birth of Jesus is an action of God that causes Mary to increase and deepen her regard for God.
- E. In addition to developing God's reputation in Mary's thinking, the birth of Jesus also caused Mary to increase her happiness ("And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior", v. 47). To rejoice is to feel extreme happiness or elation.⁵ Mary's pregnancy and the expected birth of her child

¹ It is still possible that Mary is not yet pregnant, but she became pregnant sometime during that three-month visit with Elizabeth. Joseph likely found out about the pregnancy after Mary returned from visiting Elizabeth since Mary went to Elizabeth in a hurry (Luke 1:39, Matthew 1:18).

² Some think Mary is simply deducing what will happen from the information she has and don't see anything supernatural happening in Mary's song/statement. It is never stated that Mary was filled with the Spirit as was the case with Elizabeth (Lk. 1:41). However, a more convinced explanation is that Luke intends the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to apply to Mary as well as evidenced in the nature of the song/statement. Divine inspiration seems to be a better explanation of this accurate and authoritative message. Mary's words sound as if God is speaking them. Mary has insight into what is happening beyond what Gabriel told her.

³ Luke 1:45, 11:27

⁴ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 1:46 "exalts"

⁵ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 1:47 "rejoiced"

caused Mary to develop positive emotions about God and what He is doing. Mary isn't feeling a little happiness, she is being flooded with it. Mary is excited and happy because of what God is doing in and through her. God and His actions are a source of happiness. Mary is convinced that the actions of God are real and accurately described which allows her to delight in God—a never changing and never-ending source of happiness. Anyone who refuses or doesn't learn how to find happiness in God greatly diminishes their ability to experience happiness.

- F. As human beings, we are intended to find our greatest and ultimate satisfaction in God. Through the Holy Spirit, disciples can gain and learn the ability to find their most significant experiences of happiness in God—just like Mary is doing in this moment. The happiness we experience in God is better than—is a higher quality—the happiness found in anything God provides. A spiritual challenge comes when people are convinced other sources of happiness are more meaningful than finding happiness in God. People think money, sex, success, children, a career, good deeds, reputation, etc. will make them happier than receiving happiness from God. This mindset is both tragic and harmful. The best solution to emptiness, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction is drawing closer to Jesus.
- G. Luke is inviting us to join Mary in joyfully exalting God for everything He is doing through Jesus that is recorded in the rest of his gospel. As we read about the life of Jesus and learn more about who He is, we will have plenty of opportunities to find happiness in God. Each event in the life of Jesus can increase our admiration for God and what He does. Reading the gospels can become a source of constant happiness.

III. Reasons to Rejoice

- A. While God's Spirit is helping Mary respond to Jesus in this way, we can also discover the reasons why Mary is reacting the way she is because she tells us. While Mary begins by telling us what she is feeling, she continues with the motivation behind her feelings. She is extremely happy because of who God is, what He's doing in Mary, and what He's done in the past (or perhaps what He will do in the future).⁶ Whatever the case, Mary provides a list of reasons for her reaction.
- B. Here is a list of reasons why Mary reacted the way she did to the birth of Jesus,

⁴⁸ For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant; For behold, from now *on* all generations will call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. ⁵⁰ And His mercy is to generation after generation Toward those who fear Him. ⁵¹ He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, And sent the rich away empty-handed. ⁵⁴ He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, (Lk. 1:48-54)
- C. It is important for us to observe the two types of reasons Mary gives for her reaction: 1) personal reasons and 2) general reasons. Mary begins by giving us reasons for her reaction

⁶ Since Mary's comments are very general, it is difficult to determine exactly what actions of God she is referring to. Some Bible scholars think Mary is talking about the past, others about the present, and still others about the future. It is also possible that Mary is doing all three.

because of what God is doing for her personally and individually (“has done great things for me”, v. 49). For Mary, God is not some distant thought that doesn’t impact her life. Mary realizes that God is acting in certain ways in her life. God is personal for Mary because He is doing things for her as an individual. Mary also acknowledges that God does good for her in more general ways (“His mercy is to generation after generation”, v. 50). Mary can take note of and rejoice in the actions God has done for other people in the past. God acts in general ways that are good for those who belong to Him. The list of reasons Mary provides includes both these types of reasons.

- D. As we look at the list of reasons motivating Mary’s response to the birth of Jesus, we notice all the reasons point back to the good character of God. Mary is motivated to be happy in God and to worship Him because of a few main qualities: God’s power, God’s holiness, God’s mercy.⁷ Mary also focuses her attention on God’s action of salvation. These features are highlighted in the examples provided throughout Mary’s song of worship.
- E. God’s power is evidence in God taking Mary from a poor and lowly social state to a person who is blessed and known throughout generations (v. 48). God’s power defeats and causes enemies to flee (v. 51), removes immoral rulers from their places (v. 52), and doesn’t allow the rich to get everything they want (v. 53). Not only can God’s power deal with immoral powerful people, it can also sustain and provide for the righteous who have no power of their own by exalting the humble (v. 52), filling the hungry with good things (v. 53), and giving help to Israel (v. 54). God’s power accomplished all these which is why God is called “the Mighty One” (v. 49).
- F. It is characteristic of God to possess and express Himself with moral purity (“holy is His name”, v. 49).⁸ God is not just morally pure, He is morally perfect. God never does anything wrong. He always does what is right. Every act of God is righteous and kind (Ps. 145:17). He distributes appropriate justice in each circumstances which is why He used His power as described.
- G. God is also full of mercy (Lk. 6:35-36). In each generation God demonstrates leniency and compassion shown toward moral offenders even though God has the right and authority to punish them.⁹ God is patient, forgiving, and does not deal with His people as their sins deserve. God regularly and consistently treats everyone better than they deserve but especially those who belong to Him. These are the three main reasons why Mary reacts the way she does.
- H. God is being good to Mary, which she acknowledges, but Mary is only one example of God being good to humanity. God’s good actions apply to more people than just Mary (“Toward those who fear Him”, v. 50). God’s good character and actions are relevant to anyone who approaches God as their Savior. The way God is acting toward Mary is the general way God acts toward His people. Mary is just one person in a larger group who experiences the good actions of God. God’s moral goodness is expressed in His compassion and forgiveness, His justice, His provision, His care and assistance, and His telling the truth and fulfilling His promises.

⁷ Frédéric Louis Godet, [A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke](#), trans. Edward William Shalders and M. D. Cusin, vol. 1 (New York: I. K. Funk & co., 1881), 103–104.

⁸ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 1:49 “holy”

⁹ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 1:50 “mercy”

- I. We can take the lessons learned from Mary and develop two happiness habits in our own lives. As people who love God we can be encouraged to deepen our affection for Him by paying attention to the blessings God gives to us in our normal everyday activities. What good provisions has God given to you? Or provided through the abilities He's given to you? Like Mary, we should observe how God is working in our life personally and admire Him for what He is doing for us. If we look hard enough, we will be able to find God doing a good work in our life every day. We can also be encouraged to rejoice in and be happy about what God has done for others in the Bible. As we spend time in God's word, we should pay attention to the good actions God is doing for others and rejoice in them. We can draw happiness from reminding ourselves who God is and how He works. These two habits of finding happiness in God and His word as well as the blessing He provides in our lives can help us love God more and find greater happiness in Him.

IV. God's Reliable Goodness

- A. At the end of all the examples of God's good character and actions, we find Mary's summary statement,

⁵⁴ He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵ Just as He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."
- B. Essentially, Mary, through the Holy Spirit, is telling us God has a long history of doing good and we can rely on God to keep doing what is good. God is doing humanity good through Jesus. Disciples can count on God's consistently good behavior toward them ("in remembrance of His mercy", v. 54, "Just as He spoke", v. 55, and "To Abraham and his descendants forever", v. 55). Each of these statements emphasizes the continuation of God's good actions toward His people. God has a consistent track record of dealing with people according to their character and moral behavior ("scattered those who were proud", v. 51 and "exalted those who were humble", v. 52). Individuals who have a proper attitude toward God will receive God's assistance ("toward those who fear Him", v. 50 and "He has given help to His servant", v. 54). We can count on God to do what is good and right in our lives and in the future.
- C. We can rely on God to do the right thing in every situation and do what is good for us—transform us to be like Jesus (Rm. 8:28-29). God's character and the nature of His actions do not change. He is steady which makes Him reliable. God will always act in harmony with His word. There is no deception or surprises with God in this sense. Mary is confident that God is working in her life the way He has worked in the lives of others in the past. An accurate understanding of who God is and what He does is the reason Mary exalts and rejoices in God her Savior.
- D. God will never let His disciples down by not acting in their best interest or by doing them harm. God goodness in action is dependable. We can count on it no matter what. We can learn about God's track record and reputation of doing good throughout the entire Old Testament, which Mary is very familiar with. God always does what He says He is going to do even through generations from Abraham to David to Jesus, to the last generation on earth. Through Jesus, we can be assured that God will perform good actions for us. He will help us. Even if we find

ourselves is a low economic and powerless condition like Mary, God is the Mighty One who can provide for our needs, fill us with good things, and make His mercy available to us.

- E. Are you convinced everything God does in your life is good? Those who think God is not good to them demonstrate they are confused about what is good. If your interpretation of how God is working in your life isn't good, or even possibly harmful, you are wrong. God is the type of person He says He is in His word. He is good and He always does good to and for His people. Always. Even when God allows difficult and painful experiences in our lives, He uses all of life for His good purposes. If you aren't convinced of this, you don't yet understand the true nature of God. Sometimes God disciplines us to correct us. Other times, God may take away something we enjoy or have our heart set on because it is not good for us or our relationships. God doesn't always do what we like or what we want but He does always do what is good for us. God does good constantly, generation after generation.

V. Our Response to Jesus

- A. Mary's response serves as an example for us. This rejoicing in Jesus is not just for Mary, it is for all humanity who recognizes the significance of who Jesus is,
 - ¹⁰ And so the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is ^bChrist the Lord. (Lk. 2:10-11)
- B. When other angels appeared to shepherds and announced the birth of Jesus, they said the news of Jesus' birth is good news for everyone ("good news of great joy which will be for all the people", v. 10). Happiness in Jesus the Savior is not exclusive to Mary; it is for everyone. Everyone who realizes what Jesus has done for them and acknowledges Jesus is the One who forgives their sins can rejoice in God our Savior just as Mary did. The birth of Jesus is a reason to rejoice—it is good news of great joy. Let's join Mary in thinking highly of God because of what He's done through Jesus and be extremely happy because of it!
- C. Humanity's Savior is born ("has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord", v. 11). Jesus has authority to forgive sins on earth (Mt. 9:6, Mk. 2:10, Lk. 5:24). He is also the divine Judge who has the legal authority to pardon and punish (Jn. 5:22, 5:24). Those who hear the words of Jesus and accept Jesus for the person He claims to be, will be saved from the just judgment of God. Disciples can be very happy about their present forgiveness as they live their lives without any condemnation from God and look forward to the future grace that will be available when humanity is judged by Jesus that enables them to pass safely into God's presence. All this is provided by Jesus our Savior.
- D. When we realize we are in real spiritual danger, we appreciate Jesus being our Savior appropriately. Jesus said that every person who has been angry enough with someone else to call them stupid is guilty enough to be punished by God in hell (Mt. 5:22). Every person who looks with lust at someone who is not their spouse is guilty enough for hell (Mt. 5:27-29). We need to first feel the weight of our guilt before we can feel the joy of being saved.
- E. All disciples are on a journey of discovering more about Jesus and deepening their happiness in Him as a result. The emotion of great happiness and pleasure can come to us in a large amount

through Jesus.¹⁰ The deeper we go with Jesus into the life He offers us the happier we become. The more we learn about living according to Jesus' teachings and practice what He taught the more our happiness in God will grow. This takes time and effort, but it is so worth it. The more we stay connected to Jesus the more He changes our hearts to delight in what is good. Mature disciples can regularly find deep and satisfying happiness in God.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Mary rejoices and deepens her appreciation for God because she knows God is providing good benefits through Jesus. In Jesus, God the Father is spiritually caring for His people through the mercy He promised to provide.
- B. As disciples, we greatly benefit from learning to find happiness in God just as Mary did. Becoming familiar with, thinking about, and responding to God's good actions found in the Bible as well as the benefits we experience personally can develop and deepen our admiration and love for God. Follow Mary's example.

¹⁰ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Luke 2:10 "great joy"