

TIME OF REFLECTION

“A new Power is rising. Against it the old allies and policies will not avail us at all. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor. This then is one choice before you, before us. We may join with the Power. It would be wise, Gandalf. There is hope that way. Its victory is at hand; and there will be rich reward for those that aided it. As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time, we can keep our thoughts in our hearts, deploring maybe evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose: Knowledge, Rule, Order, all things that we have so far striven in vain to accomplish, hindered rather than helped by our weak or idle friends. There need not be, there would not be any real change in our designs, only in our means.”

~Saruman, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

“Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
For all the day long I have been stricken
and rebuked every morning...

But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end.”

~Psalm 73:12-17 (ESV)

“Power is all about image bearing—reflecting and refracting the creative power of the world's Maker into the very good creation. And image bearing is for flourishing. But as idolatry fills the world with false images, and as those false images proliferate, the image bearers lose their capacity to bear the true image. The more the image bearers lose this capacity, the more creation itself is diminished, reduced to utilitarian means to bitter ends. Idolatry is the true failure of power.”

~Andy Crouch, *Playing God*

“For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar.”

~Psalm 138:6 (ESV)

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “Christmas: The Story of Glory” – *Ryan Bouton*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Luke 1:39-56 (ESV)*

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations

will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones

and exalted those of humble estate;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.