

Praise God That I Can Serve Him!

The Praise of Elizabeth, Luke 1:5-45

Christmas Praises/Songs

- Song of **Elizabeth**, Luke 1:39-45, 57-66
- Song of **Mary**, Luke 1:46-56
- Song of the **Angels**, Luke 2:8-14
- Song of **Zechariah**, Luke 1:67-80
- Song of **Simeon**, Luke 2:25-35

Main Thought: We're used by God so that we would praise Him!

I. We're Used By God ... (5-25)

- ... Because We Keep Ourselves Usable (5-6)
- ... Despite Our Liabilities (7)
- ... Because He Chose To (8-10)
- ... Because He Answers Our Prayers (11-13)
- ... Even Indirectly (14-17)
- ... Despite Our Doubts (18)
- ... Despite Feeling Socially Rejected (23-25)

II. ... So That We Would Praise Him (39-45)

- The Presence Of Christ (39-41a)
- The Power Of The Holy Spirit (41b)
- The Purpose Of The Father (42-43)

Conclusion: Praise Him ...

- For sending us a Savior
- For using us as servants
- For overcoming our stigmas and failures

Discussion:

- How are we amazed that God wants to use us for a special purpose?
- What's holding us back from being a usable instrument of God?
- How is parenting a vital ministry?

Praise God That I Can Serve Him!

The Praise of Elizabeth, Luke 1:5-45

Luke 1:39-45 (NLT) ³⁹A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town ⁴⁰where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. ⁴³Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? ⁴⁴When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

Introduction:

1. Too old for this ...

- Have you ever felt too old for a particular ministry?
- I've been saying more and more "I'm too old for this"
- But I've been inspired by some of our ladies in the church who are learning how to use Zoom and powerpoint to teach children – they are not letting age or technical experience keep them from ministering to the kids
- Moses started at 80, Noah launched the Ark at 120

2. Elizabeth

- Elizabeth's name means "God is my oath"
- She couldn't have kids
- Kids were seen as the blessing of God to a mother
- The struggle with infertility is very discouraging – as some of you know

- At the end of her days, she felt ... unusable
- At the end of her rope, she felt ... unusable
- **That's when God wanted to use her**

3. Feel unusable?

- I read the story behind the song "Mary Did You Know?" which I love hearing my girls sing slightly more than hearing Pentatonix (Ace Collins, *Stories Behind The Best-Loved Songs Of Christmas*, Zondervan, p. 114)
- Mark Lowry was a hyper-active kid that didn't do well in school. He was diagnosed as hyper-active and put on medication. Though he couldn't function at school, he could sing. His parents never gave up hope that God had a purpose for him – though the standard means of success is seen as coming through education.
- In 1984, Mark was asked by his pastor to write a program for their living Christmas tree

- He wrote the song as an interview of Mary
 - Mary, did you know, that your baby boy would one day walk on water?*
 - Mary, did you know, that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?*
 - ...
 - Mary, did you know, when you kissed your little baby, you kissed the face of God?*

- God used Mark Lowry to sing and write music when his teachers gave up on him and when he exasperated his parents.
- But when God uses a person like that, we say **Praise God!**
- Every day, I'm amazed God would save a wretch like me and use a unfocused guy with A.D.D. like me – **Praise God!!**
- Maybe God will use your to write a praise song because

4. Christmas Praises/Songs

- This Christmas season, we will take a look at what is recognized as 5 of the earliest Christmas hymns
- Praise Him! (Song of **Elizabeth**, Luke 1:39-45, 57-66)
 - Benedictus Minor Of Elizabeth (1:41-45)
- Magnify Him! (Song of **Mary**, Luke 1:46-56)
 - The Magnificat Of Mary (1:46-55)
 - similar to Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2 and many Psalms
 - title from Latin version "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*"
 - meaning "My soul magnifies the Lord"
- Glorify Him! (Song of the **Angels**, Luke 2:8-14)
 - Gloria of Angels (2:14)
- Proclaim Him! (Song of **Zechariah**, Luke 1:67-80)
 - Benedictus Major Of Zechariah (1:67-79)
- Trust Him! (Song of **Simeon**, Luke 2:25-35)
 - Nunc Dimittis Of Simeon (2:29-32)

We're used by God so that we would praise Him!

I. We're Used By God ... (5-25)
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A. ... Because We Keep Ourselves Usable (5-6)

Luke 1:5-6 ⁵When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. ⁶Zechariah and Elizabeth **were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey** all of the Lord's commandments and regulations.

- Our best ability is our availability
- Zechariah and Elizabeth kept themselves ready to be used by God by being **righteous** in God's eyes and **obeying** God's Word

- Darrel Bock: “describing a moral righteousness that conforms to God’s standards ... a blames conduct” (*Luke, Baker Exegetical Commentary, Vol. 1, p. 77*)
- They weren’t maintaining righteousness for the sake of impressing their religious peers (as the Pharisees were exposed to do by Jesus – Mt 23)
- But they were genuinely righteous **in God’s eyes!!**
- The Apostle Paul fears being disqualified from preaching (1 Cor 9:27) by not controlling his body
- If you’ve gotten frustrated from church not meeting because of Covid and you feel like quitting or dropping out – don’t! You will remove from yourself the opportunity to be used by God.
- There is a motivation to remain sinless and pursue righteousness – to be a **clean instrument**
- Ie/ I noticed the silverware didn’t get washed in the dishwasher. I hand-washed them because we were out of **forks**. We ran out of **clean instruments**.
- Ie/ You want the **dentist** and **surgeon** to have the autoclave sanitize their instruments
- Ie/ You want your grocery **cashier** to wear the facemask and sanitize their hands
- Ie/ **Priests** had to spiritually cleanse themselves before going to the temple
- **God wants clean instruments to do His work of sharing the Gospel and serving Him!**

B. ... Despite Our Liabilities (7)

Luke 1:7 ⁷They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

- Not being able to bear children was a stigma in the Jewish culture
- **Sarah** was unable to bare children even though a son was promised to Abraham. She compromised her values to get her husband a child through Hagar (Gen 16:1-2). She laughed when she heard from God she would get pregnant in her 90’s.
- **Rachel** told Jacob to “Give me children, or I’ll die” (Gen 30:1, NLT)
- **Hannah** shed bitter tears because she couldn’t have children. Her frenemy Peninnah would ridicule her for the Lord shutting her womb

1 Samuel 1:6-7 ⁶So Peninnah would taunt Hannah and make fun of her because the Lord had kept her from having children. ⁷Year after year it was the same—Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle. Each time, Hannah would be reduced to tears and would not even eat.

- Maybe you feel unblessed in infertility
- Maybe you were told as a kid you’ll never amount to anything
- Maybe you’re trying to stand out among your peers and they just keep excelling beyond you

C. ... Because He Chose To (8-10)

Luke 1:8-10 ⁸One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. ⁹As was the custom of the priests, **he was chosen** by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

- The priests were divided into 24 teams by David in 1 Chronicles 24:1-6
- Each priest had the opportunity to serve in the Temple 2 weeks out of the year
- V. 5 notes that Zechariah was on Team Abijah or Abijah's division/order
- Each priest division consisted of 4-9 priestly families (Bock, Vol. 1, p. 76)
- Zechariah was on duty that week
- Among his team of priests, Zechariah was chosen by lot (like a lottery) for the privilege of entering the sanctuary to burn incense while the crowd prayed outdoors
- Burning incense was done twice a day – morning and mid-afternoon
- He would approach the golden altar with one assistant who carried a gold bowl of burning coals to spread on the altar of incense and another assistant who carried the golden censer that contained the incense.

- God orchestrated Zechariah's calendar to be at the Temple, be chosen by lottery so he could announce to Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would bear John the Baptist

- God chose the timing
- God chose the people, the team
- God chose the purpose

Ie/ God chose the timing for me to get saved here at the church and serve – He chose you to serve here at FBC too!

Ie/ God chose the people to be our church family – maybe they're not who the world would choose, but they are certainly here because God chose them

- I will serve who is here
- We don't choose who comes to church, as much as we try to invite
- God placed our church family here
- Maybe some of our closest friends aren't here anymore but we have to get over ourselves and know we are here to serve the "chosen" here at our church
- That means getting to know new people – hang around after this service to meet some folks in our random breakout groups
- When we meet together in person again, we will be serving with some of them

D. ... Because He Answers Our Prayers (11-13)

Luke 1:11-13 ¹¹While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. ¹²Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. ¹³But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.

- It was there in the sanctuary that the angel spoke to Zechariah
- This is the first appearance recorded in Scripture of an angel for the first time in 400 years

- **Don't be afraid ... God has heard your prayer**
- God is saying He has heard his frustrated tears of Zechariah and his wife

E. ... Even Indirectly (14-17)

Luke 1:14-17 ¹⁴You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. ¹⁶And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. ¹⁷He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."

- I'm sure that Zechariah and Elizabeth were good at being a priest and a priest's wife
- But the focus isn't on their Temple work, but on their parenthood
- They are mentioned here because of who their son was
- John the Baptist is the greatest servant of God
- But Zechariah and Elizabeth were important in ministry just being parents
- We don't have recorded the priestly work of Zechariah or the ministry wife work of Elizabeth
- ie/ Daisy and I recently had a meal with a couple who knows us as being the parent of one of our kids – that's really cool!
- They don't know anything about us except that we're Brianna, Karinna, Marissa or Calissa's parents.
- **The role of parenting may be a difficult challenge, but to know our kids will be used by the Lord makes it all worth it.**
- **Don't minimize your ministry as a parent!**

F. ... Despite Our Doubts (18)

Luke 1:18 ¹⁸Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

- How will God use us despite us?
- It's not just opening the womb of an old woman, but using the old man too
- Zechariah: "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."
- He didn't laugh like good ol' Sarah – but he did question God
- **We forget that the God who created the universe out of nothing can use people without or beyond ability**

G. ... Despite Feeling Socially Rejected (23-25)

Luke 1:23-25 ²³When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. ²⁴Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five

months. ²⁵ **"How kind the Lord is!"** she exclaimed. "He has taken away my **disgrace** of having no children."

- Elizabeth was **sheltered in place** for 5 months
- Maybe she was concerned about her fragile health and advanced age
- Maybe there was Covid
- But she did what she had to do so John the Baptist would be born

II. ... So That We Would Praise Him (39-45)

- Praise Him! (Song of Elizabeth, Luke 1:39-45, 57-66)
 - Benedictus Minor Of Elizabeth (1:41-45)
- Is this really a hymn?
 - Plummer: 2 stanzas of 4 lines
 - Hendriksen: parallelism
 - Brown: "cry out" used of liturgical singing
 - But others contend it's a praise, but not necessarily a song

A. The Presence Of Christ (39-41a)

³⁹ *A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town ⁴⁰ where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her,*

- These 2 cousins came together with impossible pregnancies – Elizabeth because she was past child-bearing years, Mary because she was a virgin
- Elizabeth could have been jealous – I've tried for decades and couldn't get pregnant, and Mary didn't even try and got pregnant!
- But the focus is not on our limitations, but God's ability to work through us despite our limitations.
- The focus was not on us, but on the presence of Christ
- Even fetus **John the Baptist got into the celebratory act** leaping in Elizabeth's womb
- Zechariah heard from the angel 6 months before Mary did – so Elizabeth is in her **3rd trimester** while

B. The Power Of The Holy Spirit (41b)

and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

- We are filled with the Holy Spirit when we're not filled with ourselves – our ego, our self-reliance, our self-will
- When fully yielded to God, the Holy Spirit fills us
- Galatians tells us not do be full of the flesh or full of controlling wine, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit
- **Elizabeth was self-resigned and God-aligned**

C. The Purpose Of The Father (42-43)

⁴² *Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. ⁴³ Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit*

me? ⁴⁴ When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

- Elizabeth delighted in the Trinity – the coming Son, the filling Holy Spirit and the goodness of God the Father
- She praised him with what is understood to be the first song of the New Testament
- She is extolling the privilege of Mary and the blessing of the child
- There is no jealousy with Elizabeth that she spent decades trying to get pregnant and Mary got pregnant with trying (Mary's not even fully married yet)
- She is honored by Mary's visit
- Her baby Johnny is leaping in her 3rd trimester.
- She points out how Mary is blessed because of her faith in the God who accomplishes His Word, His Promise
- How fitting it is that Elizabeth's name means "God is my oath"

Conclusion: Praise Him ...

- For sending us a Savior
- For using us as servants
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Discussion:

- How are we amazed that God wants to use us for a special purpose?
- What's holding us back from being a usable instrument of God?
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