

A Proper Response to the Goodness of the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] as we're making our way through the book of Luke what we look at today comes at the end of two events that we have looked at over the past two weeks the first event happened six months before what we're looking at today and you remember Zachariah was in the temple serving the angel Gabriel told him that his old barren wife was going to have a son who would be the forerunner to the Messiah Zachariah doubted but God was gracious at this point where we are today six Elizabeth is six months pregnant then we looked last week at the account of Gabriel telling Mary that she was going to have a child conceived of the Holy Spirit and that this son would be the son of God and that that son would be Israel's king who would reign the world the known and and all there is his reign would have no end

Mary believed the angel and submitted to God's plan and what we look at today happens in those days the days of Mary hearing this good news from the angel Luke intends intends to continue to share the events of how the Messiah was provided for us but he also shows us more about our God that's what we're going to see today more about our God and how we should respond to him we'll be reading Luke 1 39 to 56 if you'd follow along as I read Luke 1 39 to 56 in those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah and she entered the house of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth and when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary the baby leaped in her womb and she exclaimed with a loud cry blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb and why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me for behold when the sound of your greeting came to my ears the baby in my womb leaped for joy 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 Savior 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 he has shown strength with his arm he has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and to his offspring forever

Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home let's pray together father I thank you for these words I thank you for this account thank you for what transpired in Zachariah and Elizabeth and Mary's life thank you for even the way they reacted we feel bad for Zachariah that he doubted and was chastened but that is a good lesson to us and we rejoice with the exciting things the wondrous things that you were doing in and through the two women Lord we praise you for your goodness but Lord this whole thing just speaks of the kind of God we serve the kind of God who provides a Messiah the kind of God who saves I pray that you would be with us I pray that you would help us to learn the things that your spirit intends for us to learn I pray that he indeed would be our teacher our helper today making our eyes to see opening our ears and softening our hearts I pray that you would be with us that those who know you would be brought close to you would be challenged and exhorted and would be full of praise those who don't know you today Lord the end desire is that they would be full of praise may they hear the gospel today and may they rest in you and I pray that you would draw them to yourself we pray your blessing in Jesus name amen can you imagine yourself in this situation you're one of the people who heard the angel and you've kept yourself hidden I'm speaking of Elizabeth she didn't hear the angel but her husband did she kept herself hidden and in her is this growing baby and she's not really talked much about with anybody she's she's wanted to wait until it was evident and so six months have gone by and we've went to the Luke next goes to the account of Gabriel coming to Mary and he says to her you're

going to have this son and it's going to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and it's it's going to be the son of God and and this amazing news and who does she tell she's she's a and I'll say this respectfully she's a nobody from nowheresville okay now I'm not trying to denigrate Mary but she herself says she's of humble estate nobody knew her nobody was thinking that girl over there I bet she could be the mother to the Messiah and she's gotten this news and she's agreed and said yes be it unto me as as the Lord has said and you just what do you do with that you would feel like you're going to blow up and I think it was definitely the direction of the Lord but she sought someone to talk to and she had just heard about her relative that she was now miraculously six months pregnant and so she rose and made haste to go to the hill country where Zachariah and Elizabeth lived now we don't know the exact city they lived so we can't say that we know the exact place that they lived there's a traditional spot and doesn't matter where that is I don't even remember where that is I read it this week but I don't remember but Mary leaves Nazareth to go down into the area of Judah probably by the words that are used it's probably an area to the west of Judah and so that would have made her trip a trip of nearly a hundred miles and it probably would have taken four days on foot we don't know if she was on foot so she certainly didn't have a car but she got there and so she goes down to meet

[8 : 19] Elizabeth and she greets Elizabeth now I think this was more than hi I think there was there was this oh Elizabeth I've got news and Elizabeth's going I've got news and yeah I heard and and and the discussion went on I think it was more than a hello I think based on what Elizabeth refers to a little bit later I think Mary recounted Gabriel's visit to her and I'm sure Elizabeth recounted eventually Gabriel's visit to Zachariah and and the whole whole vision that he had and so she went down to meet with Elizabeth and found in her a kindred spirit someone who understood but that's not the most important thing the important thing was as she got there and they began to talk

God did some amazing things for them now he's already done some amazing things but God did some amazing things as Elizabeth as Mary greeted Elizabeth Elizabeth said whoo the baby just jumped and that's all that's said to begin with and she goes on with the account but the the baby jumped and it was just you know seemingly probably an insignificant thing babies move all the time but there was significance to that that we'll see in just a minute and scripture says in verse 41 that Elizabeth was filled with the spirit now what does that mean well this means that the spirit indwelt Elizabeth to help her to enable her and this this happened from time to time in the Old Testament remember technically even though this account is in Luke and it's in what we call the New Testament technically they're still in the Old Testament era and so this kind of thing happened at times in the Old Testament there were situations in the Old Testament where the Holy Spirit would come upon people in conjunction with certain situations and certain events and those people would prophesy think of Saul when God called him to be king

Samuel the prophet who had the spirit on himself said you're going to go here and you're going to go there and at that spot you're going to meet up with some prophets and God's spirit is going to come on you and you're going to prophesy and it happened and they said is Saul also amongst the prophets but here in this situation the Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth and helped her to understand some things to put things together and to be able to declare things properly and so she being filled with the spirit responds and proclaims that Mary is blessed among women verse 42 she says with a loud cry blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb blessed are you among women every Old Testament Jewish woman wanted to be where Mary is even Elizabeth may have dreamed of it every Old Testament

Jewish woman wanted to be the one who would carry that promised seed from Genesis 3 15 and here it is this one this Mary is now carrying that promised seed and as Elizabeth declares that she is blessed among women she she pulls from Old Testament scriptures just like we'll see Mary do in just a moment Elizabeth pronounces her blessing based in light of Old Testament scriptures and going through this passage was an encouragement to me we have a priest's wife who knew the Old Testament that doesn't terribly shock and surprise me it does a little bit because we tend to think of people as being unknowing and unlearned and that is not the case in just a few minutes we'll look at what Mary says and that tremendously impresses me and you'll see why but her knowledge of the Old

Testament is pretty deep and wide but here the Holy Spirit has filled Elizabeth she's pronounced this blessing and she's using scriptures from the Old Testament she first refers to a word or a sentence spoken by Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite and this is found in Judges chapter 5 and

verse 24 and Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite is the person who was in the tent when Sisera fled from the judge of Israel and she says come here come here you can rest here and you can hide here and she's the one who made him to lie down on a pillow and covered him with a blanket and said I'll give you some milk and some stuff to drink and as he went to sleep she was the one who took the tent peg and put it in his temple and drove it through his head into the ground that's pretty gory but this is this is the enemy of

[14 : 19] Israel and she even though all the the men the warriors of Israel were chasing after this Sisera to kill him Jael was the one who did it didn't have a sword just a tent peg did it by kindness and she was lauded as a woman who had done great things blessed is she among women because God brought the victory through Jael and Elizabeth uses that reference in speaking of Mary saying blessed be you woman it is through you that the victory of Israel will come she goes on to say that the way God has blessed Mary stands out as one of the greatest things a woman could do and that God could do through a woman specifically being the one who would give birth to the

Messiah the Savior Mary is coming through you blessed are you among women and then she says blessed is the fruit of your womb in the second half of 42 this phrase comes from Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 4 this is a part of Deuteronomy that is part of the blessing and the curse narrative and Israel was to go into the land and once they got into the land they were to put six tribes on one hill and six tribes on the other hill and they were to recite the blessings and curses that would be upon Israel as to whether they obeyed or disobeyed and part of the blessings was when they obeyed God would bless the fruit of their womb now the initial thought of that was that it would be that their womb would produce much because it's in line with how their crops would produce much and their animals would produce much and the women would produce babies and that was a great thing it's still a great thing and so she uses that as a reference saying

God has blessed you you have been obedient to God's word so he has blessed you with the fruit of the womb now Mary goes on to have we know of at least six more children I don't think that's the emphasis it is a blessing and it's part of what she will with because she is obedient but Elizabeth is pronouncing this this blessing as as blessed is the fruit of your womb because this fruit of the womb this particular one is the greatest blessing that man could have this particular blessing would be the Savior Mary has been obedient to the Lord's command and so he's blessing her according to his promise and causing the seed of the woman to be born through her now remember when we use this term seed of the woman we're thinking back to

Genesis 3 where the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head it would be the deliverer it would be the one who would bring victory so in being filled with the spirit she's pronounced that she that Mary is blessed among women and she has pronounced that the fruit of her womb is blessed she goes on to mention that she Mary has been obedient to the Lord's command I'm sorry I missed up my notes here in her continued filling with the spirit that filling of the spirit enabled Elizabeth to understand that the baby in her womb in Mary's womb not the baby in Elizabeth's womb but the baby in Mary's womb is her Lord which is an amazing thing to understand Mary by the help of the Holy Spirit understanding Old Testament prophecies Old Testament truths and now by witness of a thing we'll talk about in just a minute has now recognized that the baby that Mary is carrying is not just a good man he's not going to be just a great man Elizabeth is acknowledging that she understands and is declaring that the baby that is in Mary's womb is going to be God in flesh he is indeed as I mentioned that promised seed now the filling of the Holy Spirit helped Elizabeth to understand that by helping her to understand the significance remember I mentioned I keep pointing to my belly I've never had a baby in my belly but you know how a woman has a baby move oh and she'll say oh that's so sweet and that's that's that's a joy and it is but as

[20 : 03] Mary and Elizabeth meet and talk and that baby leaps by means of the Holy Spirit helping her Elizabeth now recognizes that meant something putting the pieces together remember that the angel said to Zachariah that the baby that Mary or that Elizabeth would have would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb that's John 1 14 and Zachariah would also learn so he must have conveyed an awful lot to Elizabeth Zachariah also learned that this baby would be named John and that he would be forerunner to the Messiah and so he John six month in utero

John is in the womb going he's here he's here and the Holy Spirit is helping Elizabeth to understand that not only the news of what Mary brings but the forerunner even within her as a six month old gestational baby is giving testimony to the fact that this is the Messiah and so Elizabeth has been helped to see and because of that we now have more testimony Luke the meticulous historian

probably sat down with Mary herself how would she remember how many people are in this meeting we only know of two Mary and Elizabeth and Luke heard the details recorded the details and in that was able to gain a more thorough and accurate record of the fact that this is the Messiah and so Elizabeth goes on though just before we get to Mary Elizabeth goes on to say that blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord no I'm not asking for an answer but can you guess who she's talking about I'd hate it to be Zachariah at that moment I don't think she's trying to denigrate her husband I think that Luke is using her to teach us a lesson we're going to talk about more at the end but this whole idea of the difference between Zachariah and Mary is large it's important and Elizabeth says blessed you're blessed because you listened because you trusted because you said I will do it we're going to get into it more in our application but this speaks of how those who believe the word of the Lord are blessed and that was a rebuke to Zachariah let me just step back here I'm going to make this note here so I don't forget it think about this idea of Zachariah how bad he must have felt but yet how gracious God has been to him he didn't believe and God didn't say well that's it I'm going to go find someone else I'm so glad as we think about our walk with the Lord I'm so glad the Lord is gracious and merciful mercy is a huge theme in this section of scripture

God is gracious and merciful Zachariah could have been pushed aside Zachariah could have been ignored and overlooked but God in his mercy disciplined him and yet still used him and we're going to hear in a few weeks some pretty loud praise from this man who endured chastening from the Lord well as we get down into verse 46 we get into what people call the magnificent probably most of your Bibles if you have little descriptions of what the section is about you'll see that some of you say you'll see that it says the magnificent and that term comes from the Latin version of this the first words in Latin is I don't know Latin so let's just say it's magnificent and that's how it starts out and that's why it's called this it's magnifying the

[25 : 16] Lord and so as we look at verses 46 to 55 we're going to see a woman who is overwhelmed by mercy she's hearing what Elizabeth has been attesting to she's hearing what God has done through Zachariah and Elizabeth she's hearing what this means she didn't learn all I mean she learned most of this but all these things were reassuring all these things were helping to her and as she's drinking it all in her response is I can't believe how merciful God has been to me she starts out by speaking about how God has remembered her in her low estate he's looked upon her in her humble estate I think we really need to remember that and this this comes from a lot of some of the religions that are around the whole idea that

Mary was this amazing person that stood out and glorious and you know the angels almost walked by and went every time they saw her Mary like I mentioned she was a nobody very poor from a place that was very small and was insignificant as as people would look at people no one would ever walk by Nazareth and go that girl she could be the mom to the Messiah and so she's overwhelmed with the mercy of God that he's looked upon her humble estate he's given her the privilege of being that which all Jewish women longed for to be the mother of the Messiah and she goes on to say that God has done great things for her things undeserved she didn't do anything to deserve to bear the

Messiah we don't even get the phrases and she walked in the way of the Lord all of her days and kept all of his commandments sort of like we do with Zachariah and Elizabeth we have none of that she didn't do anything to deserve to bear the Messiah the angel said to her back when we looked at Gabriel coming to her the angel said that she had found favor now this doesn't mean that she had earned the privilege the word for favor is exactly the word grace here in this passage and it says that you have found grace grace is not given to those who've done so well they've earned it grace is given to those who've done so poorly they deserve worse and yet God gives them what they don't deserve you have found grace in the eyes of the

Lord think of that when you think of Noah also wasn't that he was so great is God because of who he is not because of who the person was because of who God is that he shows grace to this person and Mary is recognizing that she knows herself to be a sinner she knows herself to be nothing of report or nothing of amazement she is simply a person that God said I'm going to show grace to you and she is overwhelmed by that grace and mercy why would God allow me first of all to know him and then secondly to be the one through whom the Messiah would come and so God has elevated her in her lowest state and given her a blessed position and she I forgot to say that it's divided into

three sections verses 49 46 to 49 are talking about

Mary herself and she ends that by saying there's none like God as she thinks about what God has done for her herself she says there is no one like God and then verses 50 to 53 well 50 55 she's turning in a totally different direction but in 50 to 53 she then speaks about how God has been merciful to those that fear him and we get this picture of this God who comes to the aid of people who are helpless we talk about in these passages the rich and the poor we talk about those who have strength and those who have none and God Mary praises God for his mercy towards those that fear him he has shown his strength it says that he humbles the proud how many of us have watched a movie where we're just so aggravated at the antagonist the person who's against the main character because he's rich or he's powerful and he's using his riches or his power in an unfair way and just won't let that protagonist ever get out from underneath his thumb and finally when that person who's done all this evil because of his riches or because of his power finally when that person is wiped away we go finally justice but not just justice it's mercy it's it's justice for those who do wrong and

[31 : 40] Mary should have been included in that and we should be included in that but it's mercy towards those for whom God shows grace it's mercy to those who fear him and Mary is overwhelmed with the way God has shown mercy to those who fear him and then in verses 54 and 55 let me just those two he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and to his offspring forever Mary is overwhelmed at God's mercy towards Israel Israel is an oppressed nation they they were out of their land for 70 years they were brought back but since that being brought back they have been under the rule of others the whole time have never had a Davidic king back on the throne were always under oppression and now

Mary recognizes that the deliverer is here now she's seeing through a cloud darkly she's in a mirror darkly as it says in Corinthians she's not seeing all of it but she is rightly attesting to the fact that there is now coming this one Israel has longed for this king who would finally rule in justice and righteousness and throw off oppression she is praising the Lord for his mercy undeserved goodness of God towards these people the nation of Israel praising God for his mercy towards Israel they're going to have a king back now of course how that plays out she doesn't all understand but she has seen things that point to the other aspect of what we see more clearly that this one is coming to save his people and so he's praising God for his mercy to

Israel now she ends by pointing to the situation with Abraham there was a promised seed the seed of the woman to Eve and to Adam to Abraham there was also a seed promised that more clearly pointing to that one who would bring a blessing to all the nations and she's praising God for his mercy towards Israel she's praising him because he's keeping his covenant promises she's praising him because God has not forgotten his people now we know it to be more than just Israel God has not forgotten all of his people he's bringing redemption and then the account ends in verse 56 with Mary staying there for three months being a support we're not exactly sure what she did

I'm sure they were mutually supportive of each other Elizabeth in this situation of being an old woman and pregnant I'm sure not all the aches and pains went away from her age whatever Mary was there for three months and then she returns to Nazareth what's Luke doing in this section well first of all according to scripture that he says at the beginning he set it out setting out an orderly account of the gospel but Luke here is showing God's mercy to the undeserving that is one of the huge things that's ringing through this whole first section of the book of Luke and now it becomes evident because Elizabeth's praise is full of mercy and

Mary's praise speaks of God's mercy and so Luke is emphasizing the fact that God is merciful to the undeserving he's merciful to Elizabeth an old woman who couldn't have children he's merciful to Mary a young woman without a husband of low or humble estate in a nowhere village he's merciful to the downtrodden he's merciful to the to the Jews but he's also merciful to the Gentiles and as Luke a Gentile man writes to Theophilus a Gentile man a gospel that will probably be spread throughout Gentile areas Luke is setting in order a gospel that it's not twisting anything it's fuller flowering the idea that God is gracious and merciful to the undeserving and if in that day if you understood anything about the

[36 : 58] Jewish religion you understood that you were nothing unless you became a Jew and Luke is setting out saying God is merciful to all his people he is merciful to the undeserving so another question is what should we do with what Luke has recounted what should we do with this what should we do with what we've read about Elizabeth and Mary and their visit and their songs

well first of all we should rejoice that God is providing a savior that is born of woman we can see this and we know it's done but we're seeing how it was done and that should cause us to rejoice that God has provided a savior and that it was born the seed of a woman it fulfills the Genesis 3 15 prophecies prophecy and so many more prophecies we're seeing that being born of a woman this one is the

God man that is the only one qualified to be a redeemer for us because he's man he's close to us he can die for the sins of people because he's God he's perfect of infinite value and worth and can bear the punishment of God's wrath against sin so here in this passage we're seeing God is providing this God man through the seed of a woman we should also with this account see that God is abounding in mercy to the undeserving we've mentioned this let me just say that Elizabeth acknowledged this Mary acknowledged it God has been merciful to us so we should acknowledge it you and I should acknowledge it salvation is provided and salvation is not for those who deserve it or earn it it's for the outcast and undeserving that's us scripture says we're all as filthy rags our righteousness is as filthy rags before the

Lord so we need a God who's willing to show mercy to the undeserving and we see a picture of that here thirdly we mentioned Zachariah and Elizabeth's statement that was a rebuke to Zachariah just like to mention from that we need to be people who do not doubt God's word but receive it in faith we see in this reaction we see this in the reaction of those who initially received God's word from Gabriel and I believe because of the way Luke set this up he's purposely emphasizing this he's emphasizing Gabriel doubted and Mary obeyed Gabriel doubted and was disciplined but God was still gracious Mary trusted though she didn't understand and Elizabeth as the spirit filled her and gave her the words to say

Elizabeth declares Mary blessed because she was the one who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord and Luke is laying that out that we need to be people who are people who obey and believe God's word I think Mary's or Elizabeth's definitely pointing that out blessed is the person now I was thinking about this where would this fit in our lives well the Bible has some 360 times where it says fear not do you fear we need to be the kind of people who are like Mary instead of like Zachariah well how I know everything will be alright I know everything will be alright because God's word says it will be alright we need to be people who trust in what

God says fourthly we should be people who have received mercy so we too should show mercy and that impacts so many different areas of our lives it impacts the way we drive it impacts the way we interact with our husband or our wife it impacts the way we interact with our children we are people who got what we didn't deserve we are people upon whom God has shown mercy we need to be people who show mercy and fifthly we should share in mercy we should share the gospel of all around of all those around us who need mercy do you limit your sharing the gospel to a certain level and say okay

[42 : 31] I'm comfortable sharing the gospel with somebody of this means but when their life is too messed up and it becomes too hard I'm not willing to share mercy and share the gospel with folks like that do you show mercy to the undeserving if God desires to show mercy to the people in the city will you and I'm thankful to see that that is going on the community food distribution yesterday is an example of that but just let that challenge you in your own life are there times when you choose not to show mercy for whatever reason and lastly friend if you're here and we've spoken of God's mercy today mercy is when someone does not get what they deserve this whole gospel of Luke is about what God has done for sinners people who have broken

God's laws and now stand condemned to judgment for it if you're here and you've come to learn that you're a person guilty of breaking God's laws which all of us need to come to learn that because it is the truth but if you're here and you've come to learn that you are a person guilty of breaking God's law know also that the breaking of God's law brings judgment now if you've come to the point where you're knowing that you've broken God's law then you're probably close to getting to the point if you haven't already of understanding that breaking God's law means something it's not that God just says that's all right don't worry about it when we've broken God's law and we stand in judgment there's no way we can save ourselves but as we've seen today God is merciful to provide now he's merciful but he's also just so we can't just say don't worry about it he has to provide a way that he could be merciful to people and he did that by sending his son to take on flesh just like we're seeing in this gospel he did this

Jesus took on flesh God provided his son to take on flesh he did this to live a perfect obedient life that he might be a perfect sacrifice taking the sins of his people upon himself and enduring the wrath of God against sin for all those who will trust in his sacrifice for them the Bible says all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved Mary when God said this is what I'm doing said I believe and I'll do it God holds out the command to you come to me all you are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest he says whosoever call upon the name of the Lord will be saved and so my question to you friend today is will you will you let's pray father

I thank you for what you did when Christ came into the world thank you that we have this account of how you showed mercy to Zachariah Elizabeth and Mary and more and more importantly as Mary bears out to all of the world I pray that you would open the eyes of those who don't know you that they would rest come to rest in that mercy in the work of Christ for them I pray that you would be with us help us to be showers of mercy help us to be people who are full of praise to God for his mercy help us to love you more help us to grow grace and knowledge of you I pray that you would bless your word to our hearts in Jesus name Amen take your hymnals and turn me to hymn number 16 hymn number 16 come let us sing unto the Lord this is a hymn that just speaks praise to the Lord for who he is and what he's done speaks of his glory so let's stand and sing in praise to the Lord of who he is number 16 he comes to the Lord new songs are raised with sweet accord for wondrous pain I didn't pardon his heaven are the victory was the grace of his love love his sin on the earth upon he for heaven and our king side he has revealed his truth and pride he ought to find his strength and praise in promised way to

[48 : 25] Israel's grace and unto his people his ground that he does salvation sound horn blaze and sadly is with his nameattan ch prayer about coming and his nove great His name.

Praise God with heart, with heart sing praise. With voice of songs His glory raise.

With joy is no more than I be saved. And shout before the Lord, the King.

Where the earth and the hills pour. And the mountains from shore to shore.

And close the gates with my love for. And those kings always before the Lord.

[50 : 05] For the holy mountain is the land. All nations shall endure to stand.

Because His glory and glory in life. The Lord shall die of His blessing bright.

Receive this benediction. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. So that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope.

Amen. Amen.