

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Greater Joy

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

This week's scriptures:

Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[b] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

⁴⁶ 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,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week’s scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures):

- What do you feel when you read this scripture (excited, angry, worried, etc....)? Why do you think that is? (Explain in your group and then take that response to Jesus in prayer this week.)
- As you read this scripture, where does it challenge your current cultural context?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week’s sermon, discuss the following:

- From these texts, how does Mary see herself? How do you think God sees her?
- What do you admire most about Mary?
- What lessons do you take from her life on what it means to live sacrificially?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we’ve discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.