ELIZABETH: Speaking to Our Fear and Shame
Christmas in a Minor Key - Part 3
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The ones excluded are now the ones telling the story.

1. FINDING OURSELVES IN THE STORY

The way the Christmas story begins is not with one miracle but two.

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. For no word from God will ever fail. Luke 1.36-37

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea... Luke 1.39
2. WHY MARY NEEDED ELIZABETH

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Luke 1.39-45

- Mary needed someone who believed her.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1.41

...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. Luke 1.15c

As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Luke 1.44
The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. John 3.29

Mary needed someone who would mentor her.

This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people. Luke 1.25

“The fact that Mary was willing to travel nine days across three mountain ranges to see Elizabeth speaks volumes about how she was feeling. She longed for someone who might believe her and who could help her make sense of what was happening.”
- Adam Hamilton, The Journey

Graced people grace people.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. Luke 1.56

“First let us seek the face of God; then let us seek the face of God’s friends.” - J.C. Ryle
Mary needed someone who would bless her.

“This blessedness was not to be confused with ease or comfort or a well-being that came from possessions. To the contrary, Mary would face the whispers of those who would know she conceived out of wedlock. She still faced the task of telling Joseph she was with child. She would face the difficulties that came from being the mother of Jesus – fleeing to Egypt when Herod sought to kill the child, watching as others sought to destroy him when he began his ministry, and finally standing by as he was crucified... This was what blessedness looked like for Mary.” - Adam Hamilton, The Journey

“It is certainly not easy to hear that voice (calling us God’s beloved) in a world filled with voices that shout: ‘You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless, you are despicable, you are nobody – unless you can demonstrate the opposite.’” - Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved

“These negative voices, are so loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That’s the great trap. It is the trap of self-rejection.” - Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved
“To bless means to say good things. We have to bless one another constantly… In our society, so full of curses, we must fill each place we enter with our blessings. We forget so quickly that we are God’s beloved children and allow the many curses of our world to darken our hearts. Therefore we have to be reminded of our belovedness and remind others of theirs.” - Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved

- Mary needed someone who would deepen her faith.

- Elizabeth is the first person on record to confess Jesus as Lord.

  ...why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Luke 1.43

- Elizabeth equates Mary with Jael of the Old Testament.

  In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women…” Luke 1.42a

  Most blessed of women be Jael... Judges 5.24a
But Jael, Heber’s wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. Judges 4.21

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1.) What surprised you in this message today?

2.) Why do you think Mary wanted to see her relative Elizabeth? What do you think Mary hoped to get out of the visit?

3.) How does Elizabeth respond to Mary and why? How else could she have responded?

4.) Have you ever had someone like Elizabeth in your life? Studies have found that adolescents thrive when they have at least one strong, sustained relationship with a significant adult, this can be a coach, a teacher, an extended family member, youth pastor, small group leader, etc. Who besides your parents have made significant contributions to your life especially in an area where you were struggling, growing or learning? How did they help you? How are you different today as a result of their influence? Have you
ever been that kind of person for someone else? Why or why not?

5.) We often have the opposite view of blessing from Scripture. Too often, we equate blessings with money, health and happiness. In the Bible, to be blessed was to be used by God for His kingdom purposes. How have you been Biblically blessed? Why are people so hungry to be blessed today?

6.) Take a few moments to read and reflect on this quote from Henri Nouwen...

“To bless means to say good things. We have to bless one another constantly... In our society, so full of curses, we must fill each place we enter with our blessings. We forget so quickly that we are God’s beloved children and allow the many curses of our world to darken our hearts. Therefore we have to be reminded of our belovedness and remind others of theirs.” - Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved

7.) Now take a few minutes and bless one another. Remind each other of their belovedness just for being who they are. Think beyond what people do or even what they do for you and think about what it is about them that makes them the kind of person they are. Praise and bless that quality.
8.) Mary is emboldened by her time with Elizabeth and maybe even sees things about who she is and her purpose that are truly monumental – to usher in the Messiah Who would upset the status quo, reverse the warped value system of this world that elevates the rich and powerful, and deal a fatal blow to the enemy. Luke lays out a revolutionary theme in this story that is so unlike how we typically today tell the Christmas story. Even the song, “Mary, Did You Know?” is so absolutely incongruent with the understanding Mary so impressively demonstrates in Luke 1. Why do we do this to the Christmas story? What is lost when we do this? Take some time and read together the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55. Share with one another what you glean from this passage.