

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Advent ***
*** Topic: Joy * Luke 1:26-50 and Luke 10:17-20 * 12/14/25 ***

MAIN POINT

Jesus Christ is the reason for the season and the only source of true, lasting joy in the world.

INTRODUCTION

How would you define joy?

The Greek word translated as “joy” in the New Testament is “chara” (pronounced khar-ah’) is translated as joy, cheerfulness, calm delight, and gladness (Blue Letter Bible, Strong’s Bible Dictionary).

In what ways should the Christmas season bring us joy as Christians?

The Advent season is designed to help us prepare for Christmas. And this preparation isn’t talking about getting lots of stuff done. We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ. This week, as we continue our Advent Sermon Series, we will be considering the joy that Christ’s birth makes available to us as Christians.

UNDERSTANDING

Note to study leader: today’s lesson includes two main sections:

1. *We will start by looking at the joy experienced by Mary and Elizabeth after the angel greeted Mary with amazing news.*
2. *We will then consider the joy felt by Jesus’ disciples when they were sent out to share the good news of the kingdom.*

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:26-38

Gabriel initiated the conversation with Mary by saying, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Verse 29 tells us “Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.” Today we might paraphrase this by saying, Mary was quite shook up and was trying to process what the angel said. The Greek words describing her reaction are different than what was said earlier in verse 12, where we read Zechariah was “terrified”. The Greek word used to describe his reaction is “phobos” (from where we get our word phobia), which means gripped with terror or dread.

Gabriel unloaded quite a bit on Mary, apparently in a short period of time. What specific things did he tell Mary in these verses?

There also appears to be a difference between how Zechariah responded to the news of Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy and how Mary dealt with the news that she would miraculously become pregnant. We also see quite a difference in Gabriel’s response to their questions. Zechariah was rebuked for his lack of faith while Mary was given words of encouragement.

Zechariah asked in verse 18, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years.” The Greek words literally say, “How will I know for certain about this?” While the literal translation of what Mary asked in verse 34 can be translated, “In what way will this happen?” She may not have been questioning the fact that God would do this but rather asking about the process by which God would do this, since she was a virgin.

Gabriel had given Zechariah an immediate sign, that he would become mute. Mary, on the other hand, would not have obvious signs of her pregnancy for a couple of months. She was given the sign that her relative Elizabeth, who was not able to naturally conceive, was now six months pregnant. This miraculous conception could easily be checked out by Mary.

What stands out to you about Mary’s response to Gabriel’s message?

There was probably all sorts of difficult questions racing through Mary’s head. Why was I chosen from among all the women who have ever lived in Israel for this amazing blessing and responsibility to bring the Messiah into the world? How is this going to happen? What will I tell Joseph? What will I tell my parents, what will I tell everyone in the town who sees me pregnant? We see her humble obedience in verse 38; “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.” We also see in verse 3 that, Mary (unlike Abraham and Sarah with Hagar) seemed to realize it was not her responsibility to make this happen.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:39-45

Elizabeth was given quite a prophecy concerning Mary and her baby. What is the significance of each statement in Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary?

Elizabeth named Mary as the most blessed of women. Additionally, Elizabeth acknowledged the unique nature of the Child whom Mary would bear. Elizabeth expressed her sense of unworthiness to receive Mary as a guest because of the baby she was carrying (her son John also shared this view, as seen at Jesus’ baptism). Although God worked in a miraculous way to provide a son for Elizabeth, she proclaimed the superiority of the one Mary was carrying. In response, Mary burst out in a song of praise (1:46-55).

In verse 44, what motive did Elizabeth say caused her baby to leap for joy in her womb?

The baby leaped for joy in the presence of Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:46-55

Mary’s song of praise includes concepts from about ten Old Testament verses. For what does she praise God in her song of praise?

Mary glorified God for four specific attributes—His power, holiness, mercy, and his care for Israel. She also reflected on the “great things” God had done for her. When we reflect on God’s character and activity in our lives, we become ready and willing to follow His plans, even when they do not match ours.

Note to study leader: In verse 47, Mary describes God as her “Savior”. Mary, just like all of humanity, needed Jesus to offer himself as a sacrifice to save her from her sins.

What specific emotion is Mary expressing in verse 46? With all that is going on, why do you think this emotion is overflowing from her?

Her spirit is rejoicing in God her Savior. The Greek word translated as “rejoicing” (“agalliao”) means to jump for joy, to be exceedingly glad, with exceeding joy, to rejoice greatly (Strongs Bible dictionary). Mary seems to be rising above her immediate circumstances and is seeing the greater picture. The Messiah is here, and she is greatly blessed to bring Him into the world. And she knows God will do mighty things through Him, and this includes being Mary’s Savior.

What can we do to better focus on the greater picture this Christmas season, so that rather than busily missing the main point about Christmas, we can also rejoice in the Lord?

Re-read verses 37, 38, and 45. Mary was facing quite a difficult trial as she had to reveal to her fiance Joseph, her family, and the whole town, that she was pregnant. And yet she chose to trust God and humbly submit to him. This led to her rejoicing in Him. We need to find time to meditate on what God has done for us this Christmas season.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 10:17-20

Jesus had sent seventy-two disciples out on a mission trip. What emotion were the seventy-two experiencing when they returned, and why?

The 72 returned filled with joy. Imagine the scene as this large group lifted their voices with shouts of joy and testimonies of wonder! As the 72 reached Jesus, they exclaimed that even the demons were under their authority in His name.

How did Jesus respond to the return of the 72 in verse 18-19? What did He mean by these words?

Jesus pointed out that He has power over Satan and Has passed this power on to them. Not just power over Satan, but power over anything that could harm them. This would confirm the joy they were feeling.

What did Jesus go on to say in verse 20 should be the real source of their joy?

This phrase points to the assurance of eternal salvation believers have through faith in Jesus. He acknowledged the 72 had participated in great spiritual victories. Yet He encouraged them to rejoice in something much better than this spiritual power they had exercised. They had the assurance that through Jesus, they would spend eternity in heaven with God.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 15:13

This is the third week in our Advent series, and we have talked about hope, peace, and joy. How does this amazing verse tie these three qualities together?

Our joy and peace spring from the hope we have in heaven. And these three qualities all come from God through His Holy Spirit as we trust in Him.

APPLICATION

How often do you rejoice that your name is written in heaven? How can I better reflect on this during this Christmas season?

Consider memorizing Romans 15:13 and Luke 10:20.

Who is God calling you to go and tell the most precious news that Christ has come to offer us eternal life, or to invite to church this Christmas?

PRAYER

God, we pray that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we may know the hope to which you have called us, the riches of your glorious inheritance with your holy people. Help us to pause during this busy season to rejoice in You. Fill us with a glorious and inexpressible joy, since, thanks to Jesus' finished work on the cross, we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

COMMENTARY

Luke 1:26-55

1:26-27. The announcement of Jesus' birth carried the authority of God. It came in the sixth month, a reference to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist. The term virgin emphasized the purity associated with a young, unmarried woman. Although engaged to a man named Joseph, Mary did not yet live with Joseph. In first-century Jewish culture, engagement (or betrothal) bound them together legally as husband and wife. The wedding and consummation of the marriage, however, followed at a later time. Luke identified Mary's husband, Joseph, as a member of the house of David. The Jews knew from the Scriptures that the future Messiah would be a descendant of the great King David. This fact supported the identification of Jesus as King. The Child to be born, then, would be identified with the lineage through which the Messiah had been promised (see Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5).

1:28-30. Mary was favored because the Lord set His undeserved grace upon her, not because she had earned good standing. Understandably, she was deeply troubled (Gk *diatarasso*; "confused, perplexed") by Gabriel's visit and greeting, wondering how she had come to receive such an honor. Gabriel's admonishment that Mary not be afraid was the same thing he said to Zechariah (v. 13).

1:31-33. Mary's conception would be miraculous because she was still a virgin (v. 34). The name Jesus is equivalent to the Hebrew *Yeshua* (Joshua), meaning "the Lord is salvation." In Genesis 14:18, God is referred to as "God Most High." Humanly speaking, Jesus' lineage would be traced legitimately through the royal family of David because Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, was a descendant of David. This made Jesus heir to David's throne according to God's eternal covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:13,16).

1:34-35. The difference between Mary's response (how can this be) and Zechariah's (v. 18) is that Mary asked her question not from unbelief but from puzzlement (v. 38; see note at v. 20). The answer to Mary's question about how she could get pregnant without being intimate with a man is that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and cause her to conceive. Because the Holy Spirit was the agent of conception, the child (the holy One; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15) would be the Son of God.

1:36-38. If ever Mary was tempted to doubt God's promise to her, she could recall Gabriel's words that nothing will be impossible with God, as had been shown in the lives of Abraham and Sarah (see Gen. 18:14). Mary's response is a classic model of humble commitment (I am the Lord's slave) and willing obedience (may it be done to me according to your word).

1:41-45 The baby (John) being filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 15) fulfilled Gabriel's prediction to Zechariah. But Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit also (v. 41), and the Spirit's revelations to her were apparently the source of her knowledge about the blessed roles and identities of Mary and her unborn child. When baby John leaped inside Elizabeth, she understood that he had experienced great joy at Mary's presence.

1:46-55 Mary's hymn of praise is known as the "Magnificat," so named for the Latin term rendered as proclaims the greatness (Gk *megaluno*). It is similar in tone to the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10). There is a beautiful balance in Mary's hymn of praise. She expressed humble recognition of the greatness and holy nature of God and His grace (favor) on His voluntary slave, but also an awareness that God's unique calling on her life would result in all future generations calling her blessed. She viewed herself as both humbled and exalted.

These verses recall the descriptions of God's justice found throughout the Psalms (e.g., Ps 100:5; 103:11). God is a Spirit being (Jn 4:24) and does not have a physical body, but bodily metaphors are effective in communicating some of God's attributes and actions. God is against the proud... the mighty, and the rich, who imagine themselves self-sufficient. By contrast, He champions the cause of the lowly and the hungry, for they acknowledge their need for Him.