

IMMEASUREABLE JOY!
BIG IDEA: Jesus' identity as Savior is a source of immeasurable joy in the lives of believers.
DATE: Sunday, December 13, 2026
SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-55 (CSB)

OPENING QUESTION

How would you define authentic joy? How is it different than happiness? *Can you share about a time when you were joyful, even though you weren't all that happy?*

What parts of the Christmas holiday bring you joy?

Jesus' identity as our Savior is the ultimate demonstration of God's grace in the lives of His children. We did nothing to deserve a Savior, but through God's Son, a way was made for us to experience redemption, the atonement for our sins and eternity with God. The truth of God's grace should be a source of immeasurable joy for us, as it was for Mary. As we study Luke 1 this week, ask yourself: Is the joy you find in Christ evident to the people in your life?

THE SETTING

Luke here described Mary as a model believer eagerly responding in obedience to the heavenly message of her pregnancy. She was so overwhelmed with God choosing her that she burst out in praise. This is known as Mary's Song or the Magnificat. Mary praised God for what He was about to do and for the part she was privileged to play in His plan. She was filled with immeasurable joy!

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:39-55 (CSB)
39 In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah 40 where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she exclaimed with a loud cry "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! 43 How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!"

46 And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and his

name is holy. [50]His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him. [51]He has done a mighty deed with his arm; he has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts; [52]he has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly [53]He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. [54]He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy [55]to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.

BIBLE STUDY

READ: LUKE 1:39-45

Describe the setting of Luke 1:39-56 and what you think this experience meant to both women.

What is the significance of each statement in Elizabeth's greeting to Mary (vv. 42-45)? How did Mary respond to her greeting?

Elizabeth named Mary as the most blessed of women. God chose Mary above any other woman for a high purpose. Additionally, Elizabeth acknowledged the unique nature of the Child that Mary would bear. Elizabeth expressed her sense of unworthiness to receive Mary as a guest. 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).

We only know Mary and Elizabeth were related, we also know Elizabeth was much older than Mary. Both were unexpectedly pregnant and rejoiced at what God was doing.

READ: LUKE 1:46-50

What reason did Mary give for her joy in Luke 1:48?

Why did God choose to bless Mary? Why would God choose to bless you and me?

The joy Mary knew at that moment came through her realization that God was her Savior. Mary rejoiced that God came near to her and rescued her from her lowly state. He bestowed on her a unique privilege. She experienced the freedom to serve the One who showered His grace on her. Later, she would realize that God's salvation in the Child she was carrying went far beyond earthly status and human privilege.

In verses 49-50, Mary rejoiced in God's attributes. What specific attributes of God does Mary draw attention to in these two verses?

How does reflecting on God's attributes affect the way you worship?

Mary glorified God for three specific attributes—His power, holiness, and mercy. She also reflected on the "great things" God had done for her. As affirmed in Deuteronomy 10:21, God does "great things." Whereas in Deuteronomy this refers to God's having worked his wonders for Israel in leading them out of Egypt, here the "great things" refers to the virginal conception of Jesus, who in His ministry would bring about the events described in the second half of Mary's song (vv. 51-55).

READ: LUKE 1:51-53

In her song, Mary moved from praising God for who He is and His blessing to describing the significance of His redemptive act for believing Israel. Following the prophets' manner of speaking and writing, she sang of future events with certainty as though they already had occurred. Mary described God's remarkable activity in bringing the Messiah to fulfill God's kingdom.

What works of God does Mary mention in these verses?

Discuss how God exerts strength in the power of His arm over the world.

What contrasts or role reversals does Mary make in this passage? How do these reflect her feelings about God? About herself?

Mary emphasized the great reversals that would occur as a result of God's gift of the Messiah. Through His Messiah, God would bring down the powerful and exalt the dispossessed. Mary was a prime example of God's lifting up a person of humble circumstances and was symbolic of what God would do for all people who would respond positively to His gift of grace.

READ: LUKE 1:54-55

In the final statements of Mary's song of praise, she recalled God's mercy to Israel and to herself. God helped His servant Israel, but not only in the past. Mary's words applied to God's creative act in causing her to conceive and to bear the Messiah. In sending Jesus to be born to Mary, God showed His mercy and love to His children, in keeping with promises He had made centuries earlier to Abraham and his descendants.

Read Genesis 22:16-18. How was Jesus' birth related to God's promise to Abraham? Why would Mary consider this worthy of praise?

Mary stated that God was mindful of His mercy—literally, the Lord "called to mind" or "called to remembrance" His mercy. Mary may have meant that because God remembered His mercy, He was in the process of providing the Messiah. Despite what some may have believed, God had not forgotten His promise.

How has God caused you to wait upon Him? What lessons have you learned in God's waiting room?

How can you find joy in the reliability of God—despite your circumstances? How can you rely upon Him in the face of delay, defeat, or even death?

APPLICATION

Can people tell you are a Christian by your joyful attitude? How do you tangibly express this joy to God and to others? Gratitude for our salvation leads to immeasurable joy! Ask God to help your joy overflow in this Christmas season.

Close in prayer, giving your group members the opportunity to voice sentence prayers of thanksgiving and praise for the attributes of God we discussed today. Consider having different people in your group pray aloud the statements in Mary's song. Pray that the joy of Christ would remain in us and be full this week and throughout the busy Christmas season.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 1:39-55

1:39. The time notice (literally "In these days") serves primarily as a literary link tying what follows to the previous account (cf. 6:12; Acts 1:15). The phrase "went with haste" (ESV) should not be interpreted as an attempt to prevent Mary's neighbors in Nazareth from knowing that she was pregnant. Rather Luke here described Mary as a model believer eagerly responding in obedience to the heavenly message of Luke 1:36. Judea refers here to the Roman province in contrast to 1:5, where it refers to Palestine. The name of the city is not given.

1:41. Just as John the Baptist in his ministry was to be Jesus' precursor and prepare his way (1:17, 76), so even here he prepared the way, i.e., he announced the Messiah's presence by leaping in his mother's womb. Compare Genesis 25:22 for an OT parallel. (For leaping for joy, see 2 Sam 6:16; Mal 4:2.) This prenatal cognition is meant to attest to the truth and fulfillment of Gabriel's prophecy in Luke 1:31-33, 35. In 1:44 Elizabeth would explain the significance of her child's action. What was promised to Zechariah (1:15) was now fulfilled. John and Elizabeth were filled with the Holy Spirit even before John's birth. Thus they were the first persons to realize that Mary's child is the Messiah. That the hymn that follows conveys a correct Christological understanding is evident from the character description of Elizabeth in 1:6 and from the fact that she was filled with the Holy Spirit as she spoke.

1:42. The expression "in a loud voice" (NIV) is frequently used to describe an inspired utterance. The first two lines of Elizabeth's blessing found in this verse possess poetic parallelism, but the rest do not. "Blessed are you among women." This is a Semitic way of saying "most blessed." **What God had done in Mary outshone even what God had done in Elizabeth.** Mary was blessed here not because of her faith, as in Luke 1:45; rather **her blessedness depended entirely on her son and his greatness.** A similar beatitude is repeated in 11:27. "Blessed is the child you will bear. " "The child you will bear" is literally the fruit of your womb. The Lord had already been conceived. Although the two blessings stand essentially parallel, the first stands logically in subordination to the second. Mary's blessedness was based on the blessedness of the child she would bear. This fits an OT pattern in which the second blessing gives the cause of the first.

1:43. "My Lord" indicates that the focus in this account is upon Mary's child more than Mary herself. Here "Lord" is clearly a Christological title and refers to Jesus. The title is used in our account (and in Luke 1–2 in general) both for God (1:46) and Jesus (1:43; cf. Acts 2:36), and it reveals the greatness of Mary's child already before His birth. To these can be added the nineteen times Jesus is addressed in the vocative as Lord. It is above all by the resurrection that Mary's child is recognized as Lord (Acts 2:36), although this verse indicates that from His conception He was already Lord. The use of the title "Lord" indicates that Luke understood Jesus as standing on a different level from others. He, like God, is deserving of the title "Lord."

1:44-45. This is a partial fulfillment of Luke 1:14. For a similar expression of joy on Mary's part, cf. 1:47. Even as Elizabeth rejoiced in her subservient role to Mary, so later John would also rejoice in his subservient role in preparing for Jesus (John 3:29). Elizabeth's praise both begins and now ends with a reference to Mary's blessedness. The blessedness of Mary's faith stands in contrast to Zechariah's lack of faith in 1:20. Her blessedness is a present state (cf. 6:20-22). Again Mary serves as an example for the believer. Indeed Luke sought to maximize Mary's role as a model believer. In Acts 1:14 he mentioned that Mary and her other children were among the inner core of disciples.

Mary is "blessed" here for her faith but is "most blessed" in Luke 1:42 for the privilege of being the mother of God's Son.

1:46. The Magnificat which follows is named from the opening verb of the Latin Vulgate's translation of Mary's hymn in 1:46. As Hannah did in 1 Sam. 2:1-10, Mary praised God for what he was about to do and for the part she was privileged to play in his plan. "My soul glorifies the Lord." Compare Ps. 69:30. The verb "glorifies" also appears in Luke 1:58; Acts 5:13; 10:46; 19:17. "Lord" refers here to Yahweh as the parallelism with the next verse indicates.

1:47. "My spirit." This is another synonym for "I" as shown by Gen. 6:3; Ps. 143:4. This verse stands in synonymous parallelism with Luke 1:46 and thus emphasizes the praiseworthiness of God by repetition. This verse anticipates the thought of Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:11, 30. The use of alternative names for God in parallel statements is common in the OT.

1:48. What follows "for" will be the grounds for Mary's praise of God. God's mindfulness of the humble state of his servant is the first ground for Mary's praise and has as its background Hannah's prayer and vow (1 Sam. 1:11). In the coming of God's Son into the world, the poor and downtrodden have been visited with salvation. This humble state or lowliness is referred to again in 1:52. It need not refer to childlessness as in 1 Sam. 1:11 (or to a hypothetical vow of perpetual virginity and thus childlessness on Mary's part). Rather it refers to such a low estate as described in Acts 8:33; Phil. 3:21; Jas. 1:10. In this verse it may refer to the low state or status in which Mary was held by the standards of this world. Her child would also share this low estate, being born in a manger and of poor, insignificant parents. Yet the salvation of which Mary rejoiced also looks beyond her to the nation of Israel, as Luke 1:50-55 makes clear. Mary's self-designation as servant echoes 1:38. Mary would not be called blessed because of any intrinsic personal worth or holiness on her part but because of the child she was bearing.

1:49. God is described as "mighty" in Ps. 24:8; Zeph. 3:17, and Luke used this word to describe God's mighty power. God's holiness here refers not simply to his moral perfection but even more to his acts of righteousness and justice by which he fulfills his covenantal promises to the humble and lowly and brings judgment upon the unrighteous and haughty. In 11:2 Jesus prayed that this holiness would soon be manifested, and in Matt 6:10 this is further clarified by the words "on earth as it is in heaven." Luke's statement probably is best taken with what follows rather than with what precedes.

1:50-53. The hymn now moves from Mary to believing Israel as the change of pronouns from the first person singular to the third person plural indicates. This statement of God's positive behavior toward the humble stands roughly parallel to Luke 1:48. It parallels closely Ps. 103:17. God's gracious mercy comes upon the humble devout (such as Mary) who "fear," i.e., reverently obey, him. Whereas the first strophe of the Magnificat refers to the great things the Mighty one had done to Mary, the second strophe is a prophetic forward look at the results of the ministry of Mary's child for believing Israel (Luke 1:54). For a hymn or psalm to begin with an individual's situation and conclude with a reference to Israel's situation is not unusual.

These verses recall the descriptions of God's justice found throughout the Psalms. Those who fear Him is an OT expression that is equivalent to the NT idea of faith. Fear of God is faith in God. His arm is figurative for God's power. God is a Spirit being 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.

1:55. By referring to Abraham, Luke emphasized the continuation of salvation history in Jesus' coming rather than its disruption. In sending Jesus to be born to Mary, God mercifully helped... Israel, in keeping with promises He had made centuries earlier to Abraham and his descendants.