

Responding to God's Gift

Luke 1:46-55

December 19, 2004

Intro

One of the important parts of Christmas morning for many people is the exchanging of gifts. The giving of gifts is supposed to originate from the wise men bringing gifts for the baby Jesus. We give gifts to also symbolize the gift that God gave the world in sending His Son.

It's fun to watch the transition that happens as we see our children change from being focused on receiving gifts to giving gifts to each other.

But one of the important keys to gift receiving is in the response when the gift is opened. You don't want to be overly excited, or under excited, you want to be genuine, but not gratuitous. But every once in a while you receive a gift so precious, your response requires no forethought.

Illus – I remember doing a memorial service here for a wonderful woman who had bought Christmas gifts months before she died. What a glorious Christmas that would have been.

But we have been given the greatest of all gifts and we need to consider our response to God's giving of His Son to us.

In Mary's words in Luke 1, we have an example as to how we should respond to God's gift to us.

I. May Your Soul Exalt the Lord

A. From your soul

- This section of scripture is often called the **Magnificat** – the first word in the Latin Vulgate.
- We are to *magnify*, to exalt; to glorify the Lord.
- But the key word is **from your soul**.

Illus – The soul is that part of you that no one sees but God.

Someone once said, "The best test of a man's character is what he does when he is alone."

- Do you exalt the Lord from your soul?

Psalm 103:1, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

B. Exalting the Lord

- We need to decide that we will exalt the Lord as a commitment of the soul.
- We need to trust that He knows what is happening and that we will place our trust in Him. Even if we do not understand what or why things are happening in our lives.

Habakkuk 3:17, "Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food,

though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls,

Habakkuk 3:18-19, “Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds’ feet, and makes me walk on my high places.”

Illus – The churches in eastern DRC are suffering and call for prayer, but are committed to exalting the Lord.

“Despite the greatness of our socio-political situation here in the DRC, we keep saving our conviction spirit that the WORK OF THE LORD can’t be stopped and that the power of the hell will never be against the Church (Matth.16.18),” they write as they call us to join them in praying.

This is one of the areas that the Baers worked in when they were in Africa. I think it would very fitting for us if we sent the money from Joyce’s memorial fund to these churches.

C. Rejoice in God your Savior

- The rejoicing is a part of the response of exalting. There is a joy that comes simply from being in the presence of the Lord, and there is a heaviness that comes from being away from Him.

John 15:9, 11, “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love...These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

- But note that Mary also refers to “my Savior.”
- The Catholic Church believes that Mary also had an immaculate conception and that she was without sin as Jesus was, but this verse speaks of her need of a Savior.

Illus – Mark Lowry wrote a song that captures a beautiful thought in this regard...”Mary Did You Know?”

- One of the greatest reasons for rejoicing is for the forgiveness of our sins; by which have an eternal hope.

II. For He Has Done Mighty Things

A. He has done great things for me

- Mary was speaking of God’s allowing her to be the person who was honored to carry the Lord.
- And we can say the same thing. What a wonderful response to the Lord, recognizing the great things the Lord has done.

Illus – We used to sing a very simple praise song with the words, “The Lord, has done great things for us... for he has filled our mouths with laughter, filled our tongues with singing, the Lord has done great things for us.”

Psalm 126:1-3, “When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the

nations, “The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us; and we are glad.”

B. He will turn the world right side up

- Jesus is the might hand of God.
- He is called “God’s righteous right arm.”
- And it is He who will turn the world back to its rightful place. Today, in many places and in many ways, it is upside down.

Illus – There was a military fighter pilot who was performing maneuvers at high speed close to the ground. He thrust the controls for a steep climb, only to crash into the earth. Somehow he lost his bearing and didn’t realize he was flying upside down.

It is a parable of life today, living at breakneck speed, many people don’t know which way is up and crash. The way up is a person – Jesus the Christ.

Verses 51-53 He has and will again exalt the humble.

James 4:10, “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

Luke 6:20-21, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”

III. He Has Given Help to the World
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- The verse refers to Israel, but through Jesus, all the nations of the world are blessed in Him.
- The verse is referring to God’s covenant.
- It means that ...

A. God keeps His promises

- God does not forget His promises
- There was a great expectation for the Messiah to come at this time; they had not yet seen that God even exceeded their expectations.
- It is an important aspect of faith to not waiver in our faith, but believe that He is faithful.

Romans 4:20-21, “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”

II Corinthians 1:20, “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes;”

B. God bound Himself to us in His love

- God has committed Himself to us with an unchangeable bond of love.
- Simply put, He is for us, not against us.

Illus – My kids know that I am for them always. They may do wrong things and receive discipline and correction, but they know I will always be there.

- Nothing can separate us from this love of God, which is found in Christ Jesus.
- In other words, God loved us by sending us His Son, Jesus...

Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Conclusion

Our response to God’s gift should be the same as Mary’s, “Lord, here is my life. I will do whatever you want me to do. I exalt your name in my soul.”

Mary Did You Know?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new; and this child that you delivered will soon deliver you?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would give sight to the blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would calm a storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

And, when you kissed your little baby you’ve kissed the face of God?

Oh, Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear
the dead will live again.

The lame will leap,
the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Oh, Mary, did you know?

that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your baby boy was Heaven’s perfect Lamb?

And, the sleeping child you’re holding is the great I Am?

Oh, Mary, did you know?

So long ago?