**The Gift of Joy**

**Luke 1:26-56**

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

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 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, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

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 the Son of God. 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 nothing is impossible with God.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

1. **Joy begins in obedience**

Mary’s response was perfect. This is where it started for me as well. This call to surrender comes to each of us at some point in this life. The Lord has a purpose for each of us. Many times, our purpose that the Lord is calling us to fulfill is something that we wouldn’t have imagined for ourselves. We often respond like Mary at first. “How can this be?” It often seems impossible.

Mary’s faith was displayed in her answer. “May it be to me as you have said.” Mary chose to believe that God can do the impossible. This was likely a very exciting moment but also scary as well. What we see here is Mary by faith, laying down her own ideas and plans for the future in service to God. Even though she knew that it is impossible for a virgin to conceive a child. She believed God could do it and that he would do it. Mary Surrendered herself to God and he used her to do the impossible.

**Colton Dixon- “Build a Boat”**

Every word You say is gonna come true

You will lead me to the promised land

Everything You say is gonna happen

Even though I haven't seen it yet

I will build a boat in the sand where they say it never rains

I will stand up in faith, I'll do anything it takes

With Your wind in my sails, Your love never fails or fades

I'll build a boat in the desert place

And when the flood and the water starts to rise, yeah

I'll ride the storm 'cause I got You by my side

With Your wind in my sails, Your love never fails or fades

I'll build a boat, so let it rain

This is the kind of surrender God calls each of us to at some point in our walk. God created you for a purpose. No Virgin could have ever conceived a child but with God, a teenage virgin from a less than special little town in Galilee called Nazareth can give birth to the savior of the world.

(Continue reading)

Mary Visits 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!”

1. **Happy is she who has believed**

“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

Blessed = Happy/Satisfied

Because of Mary’s faith, she was used by the Lord to carry out his will. There is no greater joy than knowing that you have been used by the Lord. The Plans the Lord has for us are for our good. Living a life of service may seem like the opposite of living a life full of joy. On the contrary, serving the Lord is the greatest blessing. You will find yourself praising him frequently. God will use you to do the impossible. Just as Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to praise the Lord, You too will be filled with the Holy Spirit and equipped to do God’s will.

(Story)

(Continue reading)

Mary’s Song

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has been mindful

 of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

 holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,

 from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

 he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones

 but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things

 but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

 remembering to be merciful

to Abraham and his descendants forever,

 just as he promised our ancestors.”

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