

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 12-13-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

### Luke 1:39-55

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." <sup>46</sup>And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

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Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth follows the angel Gabriel's visits to Zechariah and Mary. Gabriel promised Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would, against all odds, conceive and bear a son to be named John who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Gabriel promised Mary that she would conceive a child by the Holy Spirit who would be named Jesus and who would be the Messiah—the one to save the people. In response to this incredible news, Mary went with haste to visit Elizabeth. Interestingly, the main male character at this point in the gospel, Zechariah, has been rendered mute because of his disbelief of God's promise. Therefore, Mary and Elizabeth become the main characters of this early chapter and together they proclaim the good news of God's promises. One thing to note is that so far in the Gospel of Luke the Holy Spirit has been busy and active. Here again the Spirit leads Elizabeth to recognize and proclaim the truth of Mary's good news before Mary can even share it. The reaction of John in utero to the sound of Mary's voice anticipates John's words in John 3:29—"He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled." Already even in his developmental state in the womb, John recognizes and rejoices in Jesus. Elizabeth's words to Mary here are a part of the Roman Catholic "Hail Mary" prayer, which comes directly from scripture.

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Mary's response or "song" here is traditionally known as the *Magnificat* from the Latin for "magnifies." Mary channels the ancient tradition of singing in response to God's powerful deeds as seen in the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15:20ff) and the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1ff). Mary shows a remarkable awareness of God's past deeds of salvation, as well as how those acts connect with the coming life and ministry of Jesus. Mary, described as favored by God and righteous, as a faithful Jew may have known this from her religious practices and training. Also, the role of the Holy Spirit cannot be overlooked in revealing this plan of salvation to Mary. Notice the content of her song: God is setting about reversing the world order by humbling the proud and powerful and lifting up the lowly; by filling the hungry and sending the rich away empty. Also, note that Mary roots this action and activity firmly in the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. That is, while God is about to do a new thing, it does not come about completely out of nowhere. Rather, it comes to fulfill what God promised to God's people and the world long ago.

**Discussion/Reflection Questions:**

- 1. Where do you fit into Mary's song? Would you be among those hungry filled with good things and among those lowly ones lifted up, or would you be one sent away empty and humbled? How might we respond in light of this?**
- 2. Why do you think it matters that Luke portrays two women as the primary heralds of God's messiah here in this passage?**
- 3. How does the Holy Spirit work through the church and its members today? How is this similar or different to the way the Spirit worked in the lives of Mary and Elizabeth?**