

## Songs of Praise

Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

<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."

### **The Story of Elizabeth (in her own words):**

Good morning people of the Most High God, the God who made the heavens and the earth. God bless and keep you! Thank you for coming to our home – Zachariah and mine. My name is Elizabeth. My husband Zachariah is a priest of the class of Abijah. I am a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first high priest. We have been faithful to God; caring for the widows and orphans, obeying the laws God gave Moses to give to our people, and being at peace with all people. We live in a town in the hill country of Judah. Our only regret for many years was we had no children. We had prayed to God and trusted his promises, but still no children came. We never gave up hope because children are a sign of God's blessing and pleasure.

I kept hope because I remembered Sarah, wife of Abraham – who God made the mother of Isaac when she was 89 years-old! I remembered Isaac's wife Rebecca who was married for 20 years before God answered her prayers and she gave birth to Esau and Jacob our ancestor. I remembered Jacob's wife Rachel who saw her sister Leah and their handmaidens give birth to 10 sons and a daughter before she was blessed with a child. We remembered the parents of Samson who an angel visited to tell them they would have a special child! So, you see, we did not lose hope even as years passed and no child came.

Six months ago my husband Zachariah's time came to enter the sanctuary of Our God and offer incense. While the full assembly of the people were praying outside something happened to Zachariah. He stayed much longer in the sanctuary than the assembled people could ever remember anyone staying to offer incense. When he finally came out he was mute and unable to speak. The people realized he had seen a vision. When the time of his priestly service was over he came home. He was his usual self, only he was mute. Shortly after he returned we conceived and I went into seclusion for 5 months. This was the amount of time I hoped would assure me of a full-term and safe birth – because we had been disappointed so many times before. But after five months, finally I could begin to dream of a life with this child in my arms and how he or she would grow into the special person God had designed them to be!

I am now in my sixth month and my young kinswoman has come to visit! As soon as I heard Mary's greeting my child leaped in my womb and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. My song of praise was:

“You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child that you will have.

<sup>43</sup> I feel blessed that the mother of my Lord is visiting me.

<sup>44</sup> As soon as I heard your greeting, I felt the baby jump for joy.

<sup>45</sup> You are blessed for believing that the Lord would keep his promise to you.”

In response to my song of praise Mary sang her own song of praise:

“My soul praises the Lord's greatness!

<sup>47</sup> My spirit finds its joy in God, my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> because he has looked favorably on me, his humble servant.

“From now on, all people will call me blessed

<sup>49</sup> because the Almighty has done great things to me. His name is holy.

<sup>50</sup> For those who fear him, his mercy lasts throughout every generation.

<sup>51</sup> “He displayed his mighty power. He scattered those who think too highly of themselves.

<sup>52</sup> He pulled strong rulers from their thrones. He honored

humble people.

<sup>53</sup> He fed hungry people with good food. He sent rich people away with nothing.

<sup>54</sup> “He remembered to help his servant Israel forever.

<sup>55</sup> This is the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants.”

We both await the arrival of our blessings from God! I am sure God will use us to bring them safely into the world. The Holy Spirit has already revealed that we will raise them to be instruments of God’s reign in the world! God has taken away my shame. We await God’s promises fulfilled. We wait with anticipation! We wait with joy! We wait with God’s peace!

May it be the same for you, my brothers and sisters!