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## LUKE

### Luke 1:39-56

How can we become the Christ-centered church our world so desperately needs? Join us in Luke's gospel, the most expansive biography of Jesus in the Bible. With the beloved physician as our guide, we hope to experience Jesus so we can participate with the new reality God is bringing into our world.

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## The Big Idea

Who does God love to love? Not the high and mighty, nor the religious elites who think they "deserve" it, but rather anyone who responds to God with simple trust and surrender.

## Good to Know

- **"A town in Judah" (vs. 39)** is probably referring to a smallish village in the hills near Jerusalem.
- It probably took Mary three to five days to walk the 80 to 100 mile journey. If she went alone, it would have been highly unusual and dangerous for a single woman of Mary's age.
- **"The baby leaped" (vs. 41)** - Jewish tradition understood babies to be conscious and responsive to God, even in the womb.
- The meeting of the babies parallels Jacob and Esau's in utero "tussle." The difference is that where Jacob and Esau were in a battle for superiority, baby John is leaping for joy at his cousin Jesus' arrival!
- John's "baby dance" is a precursor to when he would later say, "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30).
- Luke never tells us how Elizabeth knew Mary was pregnant, leaving us to revel in the mystery.
- **"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (vs. 41)** - In the Old Testament, only select people were filled with the Holy Spirit for special purposes. Elizabeth Zechariah and John the Baptist are some of the last people to be "selectively filled" with the Spirit before the Holy Spirit was "poured out on all flesh" at Pentacost (as promised in Joel 2).
- **"The mother of my Lord" (vs. 43)** could also be translated as "the mother of my king." This mirrors 2 Samuel 24:20-21 where Araunah is dumbfounded when he is visited by King David.
- **"Blessed is she who believed" (vs. 43)** is the first beatitude in the New Testament, emphasizing the happiness of those who respond to the gospel with simple trust and surrender.
- Mary's song (vs. 46-56) is called "the Magnificat" (The Latin word for "magnifies"). In 1933, Deitrich Bonhoeffer described this song as "the most passionate, the wildest and one might almost say the most revolutionary Advent hymn that has ever been sung."

- While the Old Testament contains about 170 songs, the New Testament only contains about 15. Luke's first two chapters contain four of them. (We think Lin Manuel should make a musical!)
- Mary's song has lots of parallels to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:10. Both women praised God for the "great reversal" in which He lifted up the poor and brought the arrogant down low.
- This song is not just a commentary on social justice, it's Mary's way of describing the stunning turn of events that God loves to bring to people who thought God had forgotten about them.

## Group Guide

### Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

## Conversation Starters

1. If something life-changing were to happen to you, who is the first person you'd want to visit?
2. Knowing Mary was an unwed mother in a conservative culture, what kind of reaction do you think she might have expected from Elizabeth? What did she get instead?
3. Why did Elizabeth describe herself as "favored" (verse 43)?
4. Judging from Elizabeth's experience, what is it like to be filled with the Holy Spirit? How do you experience the joy of the Holy Spirit in your life?
5. What are your favorite church songs and why?
6. What jumps out at you from Mary's song (vs. 46-56)?

## Prayer Prompts

Lord, our souls magnify you! Our spirits rejoice in God our Savior! Thank you that your mercy is always there for those who fear you. Thank you that no one is beyond your justice and that you love to fill the hungry with good things! Amen.

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