

Three Proper Responses to a Growing Knowledge of Our Savior Jesus

Say it in a Sentence: A greater knowledge of our savior should cause us to follow Christ, to live humbly, and to praise The Lord.

Introduction

I would like to begin this morning with a question: What is it that fires you up?

- Not in terms of anger or irritation, but excitement and happiness. Where is it that your joy and your happiness come from?
- In other words, what are the kinds of things that you want to talk about, share with your friends, and enjoy in your own mind?

For many in our culture they would give answers like this:

- Our sports team won!
 - The last two weekends there have been rivalry games like IU vs. PU, OSU vs. Mich, Ala vs. Auburn, ND vs. USC, Oklahoma vs. Okla St.
 - Yesterday, there were games that determined who will play for the national championship.
 - Some of those fans were fired up, they were excited ... because their team won. They cannot wait to get to work to talk to others about the game. Their identity is wrapped up in their favorite team.
 - The Bears are having a great year, the Colts not quite as good. But people get fired up when their teams are winning.

In fact, find someone who is passionate about their sports team and it is amazing the facts they know, the length of time they could spend talking about it. They are genuinely fired up.

- Major celebratory events in life
 - Turning 18 or 21
 - Graduating from HS, College, or Graduate school
 - Getting married
 - Having a first child
- Maybe the kids would say Christmas morning gets them pretty fired up.
 - They stay up most of the night hoping that the right gifts will be under the tree.
 - They hoped their parents were out on black Friday getting the really great deals.

I am not trying to be a scrooge and take fun things out of life. I am all for the fun. I like rooting for teams, celebrating milestones, and watching kids (and adults) be excited about what someone else did for them. However, those things have a place. That place is behind the awesome news that a savior is born ... who is Christ the Lord.

- Our lives should be lived in such a way that people around us would say this about us He or she is all about Jesus. He or she follows Jesus, lives humbly before Jesus and praises Jesus in all they do.

This Christmas we decided to study Luke 1-2 from the perspective of Taking the Next Step in our knowledge of the Savior.

Last week, PV explained how the message of Jesus can remove our shame and our disgrace as it had for Zacharius and Elizabeth.

- Even though they had to bear the weight of not being able to have children for many years it was God who removed their disgrace by not only giving them a child but giving that child (John the Baptist) a very special mission.
- This morning I would like us to continue our study by thinking about Three Proper responses to a growing knowledge of our Savior Jesus.

With that in mind please turn to Luke 1:26. That is on page of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you. I am going to be reading from v. 26 through v. 56. This is the Word of the Lord.

- By way of reminder Luke is organizing his account in order to explain in an orderly fashion the life of Jesus.

I would like to show how being fired up about Jesus find specific expression in the text this morning. This text has a ton and let's just dive in right into the middle.

I. Follow Jesus the Great Savior King (vv. 32-33)

In due course I will deal with the angel's greeting and Mary's response. For now, however, I would like us to think about the angel's description of the child that Mary will bear. This text gives 5 descriptions of Jesus. They have a striking similarity to the words of Isaiah who foretold:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Notice how the angel describes Jesus in very similar terms.

A. He will be great (v. 32)

As we are reading the text we cannot help but notice v. 15 where John is described as "great in the sight of the Lord." Jesus on the other hand is simply regarded as great ... no qualifications ... no additions ... no subtractions.

- Of course, living on this side of the cross we know how true and marvelous Gabriel's statement is. Jesus truly is great.
- According to Col 1 he is Creator and Rev 5 makes it clear that he is also Redeemer. Jesus is great (period). Gabriel adds:

B. He is the son of the Most High God (v. 32)

This is a fascinating phrase. In the Bible this phrase normally occurs in the midst of contexts where people tended to serve multiple gods. In these contexts, then, a

distinction is being made between the gods that are powerless and worthless, and the most high God – the God of heaven and earth. For example,

- When Abraham meets the Melchizedek in Gen 14 he is called the priest of the Most High God. For Abraham who was in the early stages of learning about the God of heaven and earth this would have been in sharp contrast to the pagan gods found in his society.
- In the Aramaic section of Daniel [written in Aramaic to give the people of the world access to this portion of Scripture] the term is found frequently distinguishing the gods of the world from the God of heaven and earth.
- In the writings of Luke which seem to have a more gentile audience. Again Luke wants to make a distinction that Jesus is not the son of a god, but the son of the Most High – the one true God.

The descriptions continue...

C. The Lord God will give him the throne of David (v. 32)

This would have been an incredible statement to Mary. She appears to be a very pious Jew. She is acquainted with her OT. So she would have known that a messiah was coming. There was a prophecy made in 2 Sam 7.

2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16 ¹² *"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . . ¹⁶ "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""*

In the context remember that they are living under Roman rule.

- In fact, there has been very little freedom of God's people for the last 200 years!
- God's people were looking for the one who would take the throne of David as promised.

For Mary to hear these words must have been unbelievable. Are you kidding me? I am going to give birth to the one who will receive the throne of David?

D. He will reign forever (v. 33)

Can you imagine the hope that would have filled her heart? After the Greek rule and the reality that Israel was simply the whipping boy for the Ptolemy's and the Seleucids in the 3d and 2d centuries BC only to give a brief period of freedom before Rome came.

The child born to Mary stands in obvious contrast to the rulers of the nations whose rules and reigns last for a limited period of time. Her son, Jesus, will reign forever. Are you fired up yet?

E. His kingdom will have no end (v. 33)

Around here we believe in something called premillennialism. It simply means that there will be a 1,000 reign of Jesus on the earth prior to the eternal state when the final consummation comes to pass. It is Revelation 20 just before Revelation 21-22.

- But it is important not to say that the kingdom of God will last 1,000 years. What does this passage say? It lasts forever. The millennium is the kick off party, the pre game warm up where his saints rule and reign with him.
- But let's be clear. The reign of King Jesus is forever and the kingdom for which he is sovereign is FOREVER!

The birth of King Jesus is something that we can all get pretty fired up about can't we? Earlier we heard the worship team sing "To know you." Friends, Jesus is not simply a miracle baby – like John was – he is more than John. He is the Great Savior King. So let me encourage you ... be fired up about Jesus. "To know you, Jesus, is to want to know you more."

For those here this morning that aren't sure what it means to be in that kingdom then please let me tell you if you do not have a personal relationship with this Savior King – you are in the wrong kingdom. You are in a kingdom that will be destroyed, crushed, and ruined.

- "Kingdoms" on this earth rise and fall. Sovereign states are overrun, conquered, and sometimes liberated only to have the cycle repeat at some later point in human history.
- But there is one kingdom that will never fall. There is one kingdom that will stand forever. That is the kingdom of God with King Jesus on the throne.

God is the only one that transfer you from the kingdom of darkness where sin reigns and where you will be punished for your sin and put you into the kingdom of his dear son.

- You need to see your sin for what it is ... an offense against God
- You must believe in the birth, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- You must trust that there is only one way ... through Jesus (quote Acts 4:12)
- This Christmas could mean so much more to you!

For those of you here is morning who do that you are in the kingdom of his dear son, then these truths about Jesus raise some interesting questions:

- Whose kingdom are you serving? Jesus said not to worry about your life but seek the kingdom of God instead. It is so easy to seek our own kingdom. To create a little empire all our own. But This passage would encourage us to "follow" him and let him care for the other details.
- Does this knowledge of Jesus encourage you to "want to know him more?" He is the Great Savior King ... what else is true about Jesus?
- Do these truths about who Jesus (that he is Savior King) is cause you to finish the story in your mind [his life, death, burial, and resurrection and then the gracious calling for you to be one of his children] cause you to praise the Lord? Are you fired up in Jesus?
 - Could use the water glass to illustrate that what comes out is based on what was in it.

Let's be fired up about Jesus, our Savior King and follow him with a passion and a zeal worthy of the name of Christ.

- Fired up at CFE
- Fired up at LN
- Fired up in your personal Christmas outreach activities

Now that we have focused particular attention on Christ let's back up and pick up the rest of the text. As we look at Mary we can see how this announcement of Christ's birth impacted her. From her example we should...

II. Live by Faith, Trust, and Humility (vv. 26-45)

I think many of you know that I was born into a very traditional Irish catholic family. Mass was a normal part of the holiday routine. The nativity scene could be seen all over the home.

- Of course, the traditional Catholic view of Mary is extremely overstated.
- However Scripture makes it clear that her response toward the news of King Jesus is right on the mark and we do very well to emulate her response.

Reading Luke 1 requires that you see the appearances to Zacharias and Mary, the news they receive, and the responses to the news together. So I will be reminding you along the way of the text that P.V. explained last week to refresh our memory. Lets see ...

A. Comparison of the News given to Zacharias and Mary (vv. 13-17 and vv. 28-33)

| Zacharias | Mary |
|---|---|
| Your prayers have been heard (v. 13) | The Lord is with you ... you are favored by the Lord (vv. 28, 30) |
| A child conceived through "normal" means of procreation (v. 13) | A child conceived in a unique way (v. 35) |
| Your child will be great ... filled with the Holy Spirit ... and full of the spirit and power of Elijah ... turning people back to the Lord (vv. 15-17) | Your child will be Messiah ... the Son of God. (vv. 31-33) |

Of the two messages Mary gets the more outrageous one. Admittedly, the message to Zecharias is unusual and seemingly too good to be true. However, Mary's news is a bit more shocking on at least three accounts:

- While we must admit that an angel appearing to explain how one of our prayers will be answered seems a bit wild, at least there was a prior occasion for the visit. For Mary, there is no such occasion. She is simply a poor young woman engaged to a man living in a small town of very little significance in the culture.

- She will conceive in a means that is very different than everyone else. She will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. Zacharias is told that Elizabeth will bear him a son.
- The child that will be born will be the Messiah, the great savior king. The description of John the Baptist is wonderful and all of us who are parents would love to see one of our children called by God to do ½ of John’s mission. Yet, Mary is told she is giving birth to the Son of the Most High God.

So the message given to Zacharias might be an 8 or 9 on the “that’s unbelievable” scale, but Mary’s message is off the charts. She is asked to believe that

- God’s grace has chosen her
- She will conceive in a unique way ... never before and never again
- She will give birth to the son of the one true God.

B. Comparison of the Response to the News by Zacharias and Mary (vv. 18-20, vv. 34-38)

| Zacharias | Mary |
|--|--|
| How will we know? This is a request for a sign. (v. 18) | How will come to be? (v. 34) She is asking for more information. |
| The reason the sign must be given is both Zacharias and Elizabeth are old! (v. 18) | I am a virgin (v. 34) |
| Zacharias was judged due to his unbelief (vv. 19-20). | May it be to your bondservant as you have spoken (v. 38) |

This comparison is the most amazing of all. Mary gets the more shocking news and yet she responds with belief and trust. Despite Mary’s youth she is, at this stage, sold out for all that God had designed her for. We even need to admit that the answer she gets from the angel in vv. 35-37 does not exactly explain all the details.

- The power of the Most High (remember Jesus is called the son of the most high) will come upon her. Oh ... well then... that explains it!
- Elizabeth is pregnant despite the fact that she is beyond normal child bearing years.
- Nothing is impossible with God.

At this, according to the text, Mary does not ask another question. She does not offer up a fuss or complaint. With great humility simply acknowledges that she is nothing more than a bondservant of the Lord.

In v. 34 there is no reason to assume that Mary does anything but believe the angel and in v. 38 she acknowledges her trust.

- This series is particularly interested in what Luke describes, not what all the other gospels describe, but if we allow the others to speak for a moment we realize just how hard this news would be to Mary.
- Joseph has to be convinced by an angel that Mary has not committed adultery against him (in their society betrothal was like engagement on steroids. It could

only be broken by divorce and sexual activity at this stage was considered adultery.) Had Joseph divorced her, life for Mary was extremely uncertain.

- Just as Elizabeth had been given the name “barren” because she could not have any children (and thus the shame that went with it) so Jesus’ birth was well known. On several occasions in the gospels the Jewish leaders refer to Mary’s supposed adultery as the reason for Jesus’ birth. They call Jesus an illegitimate son and they call Mary an adulteress.

What we see in this passage is an amazing example of trust, faith, humility, and obedience.

- This message from the angel would result in great spiritual blessing, but there would be a social cost she would have to pay.
- For Mary, the bondservant of the Lord, she was more than happy to pay it. Her life would be characterized by faith, trust, and humility
- For Mary, things are simple. She is the Lord’s and all that she has is the Lord’s. So when the Lord decides that her task in this life will be the mother of the messiah she joyfully submits without a shred of attitude!

I just simply love that.

This interpretation of the Mary’s response is also confirmed in the text.

C. Confirmation of her wonderful reaction (vv. 39-45)

As we learned last week, Zacharias gets his sign ... he cannot speak for a long time (like a year!). Mary simply responds “May it be according to your word ... a bondservant of the Lord.”

- So while Zacharias grabs his legal pads and a box of pens (as P.V. put it last week...an image I can’t yet get out of my mind), Mary and Elizabeth have a little reunion ... I wonder if Zacharias was there (can you say awkward!)
 - You wonder if anyone has gone to be with the Lord and asked Zacharias ... “Dude, what was it like for the Lord to shut you up for a year?” After you were able to speak how many times did you have to tell that story? Grandpa ... can you tell us the story of when the Lord shut you up again???
 - It is a really bad day when you go to church and everyone knows that you have seen a vision and you can’t say anything. (vv. 21-23) (notice vv. 57-59 it is still awkward)
 - It reminds me of the sons of Sceva...remember those guys ... they take on a demon possessed man. Thinking that they were going to cast out the demon. When you go into a fight with your clothes on and you leave the fight naked that is a pretty good indication that you lost!
 - Enough of that...
- At this reunion Mary is once again given a sign that the words of the angel have indeed come true
 - John the Baptist leaped for joy in her womb

- Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and reveals the mind of God regarding Mary
 - It may be that this is how Elizabeth understands that the child Mary is carrying is in fact the Lord Jesus.
- Mary is called the “mother of my Lord” ... here she is a poor girl probably somewhere in her teens at this point who is called blessed and the mother of my Lord ... Isn't that amazing! Elizabeth is impressed
- Mary is referred to as the one who “believed.” That is in contrast to Zachariah.

The text is clear: Mary stands in sharp contrast to Zacharias and she is praised for her godly response to the message. Her humility, her belief, and her trust indicate that truly she viewed herself as a bondservant of the Lord.

This reminds me of the story of Joseph [develop]. Who did the right thing even when it cost him!

This raises several application type questions for you and me:

- Do we view ourselves as bondslaves of the Lord? With the kind of humility that Mary did, where God had the right, and we would consider it a privilege to live for him regardless of what he calls us to?
 - Even something challenging or painful
- Are we willing to suffer socially for living wholeheartedly for Jesus?
 - In our schools, workplaces, friends, even in our own homes
- Are you willing to look for joy in your heartaches believing that this is part of God's plan for your life?
- Are you believing that the ministry of Jesus is truly what saves and what your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers need above all else?

Mary serves as a wonderful example of what it looks like to live by faith, to trust in the one she serves, and to be humble before the strong arm of the Lord.

In addition to following, trusting, and living by faith the final point I would like us to consider this morning is...

III. Praise the Lord for He is Awesome (vv. 46-56)

This song is powerful. It flows out of a heart that is all about humility, service, and appreciation for all that God is doing in and through her. Listen to her prayer.

- [For those of you who would like to study this prayer more please see 1 Sam 2:1-10 and the prayer of Hannah ... we just don't have time to deal with it this morning].

A. Praise him for his work in your life (vv. 46-49)

This section of her song praises the Lord for the work that he has done in her life. She mentions

- He looked upon her with care in her humble state. Despite the fact that she was a social nobody ... God saw her with his great care.
- The Mighty One [the one for whom nothing is impossible .. the one who is Most High] has done great things for her in allowing her to be this person
- Despite the challenges that will come in the days ahead she recognizes that God has chosen her to leave a mark on human history.

Friends, do you have praise for the Lord like this? Where you, like Mary, recount to the Lord the great things that he has done for you.

- I have mediated recently on the book of Judges and more importantly the gracious God of the Judges and the reality that the problems faced in the Judges are reversed and solved through King Jesus.
 - Then to consider how it is that this gracious, compassionate God deals with me. Truly amazing.
 - We all have a story. Most of our stories include some dark days. Some troubling days. Some days that we would like to forget if we could. Yet, if you know Christ as your savior then those days have been redeemed. Your life has been changed. You are not who you once were. You are more! You are more than your mistakes, your sin, your hurts. You are a child of the King.
 - Do you praise him for making you “more”? Do you praise the Lord because he has transferred you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his dear son?
 - Do you praise him for how he uses you today to get things done for the Lord?
- Mary begins her song by praising the Lord for all he had done for her.

B. Praise him for his work for all (vv. 50-53)

In the second section of this song Mary focuses on what God has done for people in general. Her praise focuses around the following points:

- He is great in mercy to those who fear him and to those who are humble before him
- He is great in his judgment toward those who are proud, able to crush others, and wealthy through sinful means.

In other words, Mary, despite her youth, is able to see things as they are.

- Those who are powerful, rich, and influential often use those means in order to exploit those around them.
- There is no justice in these cases.
- People in these places are able to harm others without repercussions.

But Mary recognizes that her God keeps proper score.

- He rewards those who fear the Lord and remain humble before the Lord even if they suffer at the hands of the powerful.
- Those rewards may not be obvious in this life, but her soul magnifies the Lord because she understands that God will eventually settle the accounts.

This is a new and fresh way to praise the Lord.

- We praise him for giving our friends strength to live godly lives in a bad marriage.
- We praise the Lord for protecting the weak from those who harm them (VOM).
- We praise the Lord that he is the one who is sovereign over all.

Do you have a place in your prayer life for this kind of praise?

C. Praise for His covenant keeping actions (vv. 54-55)

In vv. 54-55 Mary praises the Lord that he is keeping his covenant with his people Israel. The nation of Israel has a mixed past with the Lord. Sometimes they followed him and sometimes they rejected him. God however, remained faithful to them.

Again, God's covenant keeping promises free you up to do so many things. Imagine if you had to keep your salvation. The amount of effort that would require would be challenging especially once you realize you could never keep it going.

Do you praise him that you can count on his promises?

- When he say you have an inheritance you have one
- When he says his Spirit dwells in you then his spirit dwells in you
- When he says that he makes intercession for you then he really makes intercession .
- That is something guaranteed. Do you praise him?

Summary

The Christmas season gets a little crazy. Amidst the craziness let's not miss the most important because we are too busy with the urgent.

- Knowledge of our savior should encourage us to follow him (as the only one worth following), it should encourage us to be humble recognizing that we are a bondservant of the Lord, and it should encourage us to praise Him because he is a great God.

In the words of the song we are about to sing together. "To know you is to want to know you more." Is that your testimony this morning?