

"In Those Days...A Promise Kept"
Pastor Wally Contreras
December 13, 2020

"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home." (Luke 1:39-56)

* * * * *

Pastor Wally pointed out the importance that two women were giving "testimony" of God's divine intervention surrounding the birth of Jesus...and on the morning of Jesus' resurrection the women were the first to the tomb and the first to see the risen Lord (Matt 28). In ancient Israel the Jewish culture was one of the most male dominant cultures in the whole world. In ancient Judaism around 1 A.D., the woman only had rights in the home and even that was very limited. Women were only allowed to receive very little education on religion and the main religious instruction in the home was given by the man and not the woman. They could not be disciples of any great rabbi. In court a woman's testimony was considered suspect. Women also did not have the right to divorce. Because we rely on the "testimony" of Elizabeth and Mary, what does that say about God's view about the rules regarding women both then and today and why?

Are there people that I tend to marginalize because of who they are? If so, how so? If not, why not?

"And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb." (Luke 1:41, emphasis added.) Matthew Henry suggests: "It is very probable that she (Elizabeth) had been

several weeks quick (for she was six months gone), and that she had often felt the child stir; but this was a more than ordinary motion of the child, which alarmed her to expect something very extraordinary, *eskirtese*. It is the same word that is used by the Septuagint (Septuagint (sometimes abbreviated LXX) is the name given to the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures) (Gen. 25:22) for the struggling of Jacob and Esau in Rebecca’s womb.” Does this additional information provide me with any additional insight regarding the fact that the baby (John) “leaped” in Elizabeth’s womb? If so, how so?

When was the last time that I felt a desire to “exclaim[] with a loud cry” what God has done in my life? Explain.

Mary’s “song” found in Luke 1:46-55 is sometimes referred to as “The Magnificat” (Latin for “[My soul] magnifies [the Lord]”). John Piper points the parallels seen between Hannah’s and Mary’s expressions and ideas:

Hannah (1 Samuel 2)	Mary (Luke 1)
v. 1 My heart exults in the Lord; I rejoice in thy salvation.	v. 46f. My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
v. 2 There is none holy like the Lord.	v. 49 Holy is his name.
v. 4 The bows of the mighty are broken but the feeble gird on strength.	v. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.
v. 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.	v. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Pastor Wally pointed out that Mary knew her Scripture. John Piper continues: “The parallels are not word for word; neither Mary nor Luke is quoting the Old Testament. Instead it seems to me that Mary is so steeped in Scripture that when she breaks out in praise, the words that come naturally to her lips are the words of Scripture. Being a young woman, she probably loved the stories of the Old Testament women of faith like Sarah, Deborah, Hannah, Ruth, and Abigail. What an admonition to us all, both women and men (young and old—Mary probably was not over 15): to steep our minds and hearts in the Scriptures day and night so

that the words and thoughts of Scripture fill our mouths as naturally as they did Mary's." How about me? Is my mind and heart "steeped" in the Scriptures...so that the words and thoughts of Scripture [fills my mouth] as naturally as they did Mary's? If so, how can I continue and improve the "steeping" process? If not, what is needed for me to start the "steeping" process?

Meditate on Pastor Wally's assertion that God uses little people to do great things.

Pastor Wally discussed how God "has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts (Luke 1:51)" and "the rich he has sent away empty (v. 53)". The current world population is approximately 7.8 billion people. According to Finca.org, over 1 billion people live on \$2.50 per day and 280 million of those one billion people live on about \$1.25 per day. According to Worlddata.info, people in Ethiopia earn about \$71 per month, in Sudan it is \$49 per month, in Afghanistan it is \$45, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo people earn about \$43 a month. How do I define being "rich" and being "poor" in my life? Explain.

Pastor Wally, in speaking of the vastness of space, said that God knew we would one day have a Hubble telescope that was launched in 1990 enabling us to see locations which, according to NASA, "...are more than 13.4 billion light-years from Earth, capturing galaxies merging, probing the supermassive black holes that lurk in their depths, and helping us better understand the history of the expanding universe". Pastor Wally also said that the more I read the Bible, the bigger God gets. How much time in any given week do I spend reading, studying and (not or) meditating on His Word?

Do I need to adjust some of my daily priorities to allow me to spend more time in His Word daily? If so, how can I do that? If not, how has the time I spent in His Word this past year changed my view of God?

Take some time in the next couple of weeks and try to put into writing (maybe write it in my journal) just how big my God is and then as I read and study His Word, update this description in the coming year as God becomes bigger and bigger to me.