



STORIES OF LIFE!

The Gospel of Luke

Community of Faith!

Luke 1:39-56

Message #3 of 50 – S775

Sermon given on January 21, 2018



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Community of Faith!

Luke 1:39-56

Opening Comments

- Turn to **Luke 1**
- We continue a study through the Gospel of Luke – **The Stories of Life**
- Last October, I shared a message in the What’s Important series about Community
- In that message I talked about four types of community
- The first was **Communion** – being in relationship with God
- The second was **Fellowship** – being in relationship with other Christians
- The third was **Discipleship** – being in relationships to learn to be a better Christian
- The fourth type was **Outreach** – being in relationships to help others begin a relationship with Jesus
- Real Christian faith is not something we do on Sunday mornings at church
- Real Christian faith is always practiced in community with other people
- This morning we will look at how faith led Mary into Community
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Community of Faith!**
- Last time Mary had the radical encounter with the angel Gabriel
- He told the young virgin girl that she would conceive without the aid of a man
- The Child she would conceive would be great, He would be divine, and that He would be the long-awaited Messiah
- And then she had the unique communion experience of “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you.”

- In that instant, she knew she had conceived, just as Gabriel said she would
- I have never been a young girl, but try to imagine what she is thinking
- Who could she tell? Who could she talk to about it? Who was there that would understand? Who was there that would believe her story?
- Wait, there was one person who would believe
- **Luke 1:39-40**
- Elizabeth was a relative of Mary – she was an old woman, probably old enough to be Mary’s grandmother
- And until six months earlier she had been barren
- But then she miraculously conceived after her husband Zacharias had encountered the angel Gabriel in the temple in Jerusalem
- Don’t miss this – Mary had radical communion with God
- But God knew she was going to need more than that
- She was going to need someone to fellowship with
- Someone she could talk to, someone she could rejoice with
- God sovereignly arranged it so that Mary would have someone to fellowship with after she conceived
- Think about this – Why did God cause John to be conceived miraculously? John didn’t have to be conceived miraculously to be a prophet of God
- As far as I can tell from the biblical record, only one other prophet, Samuel, was conceived miraculously
- Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy so that Mary would have someone to talk to
- Brothers and sisters, we need to fellowship with other believers

Hebrews 10:25 NLT

Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

- Only other Christians can understand the Christian life and its challenges
- So, Mary, this young girl, travels down to where Zacharias and Elizabeth live – at least sixty miles, maybe close to 100
- Without warning Mary walks in the door, gets an unusual greeting

• **Luke 1:41-44**

- Elizabeth’s six-month fetus responds to Mary’s entrance

- There's a powerful message here for pro-choice proponents
- John is at about 26 weeks – he would be about 9 inches long, and weigh a little over a pound – if he were to be born at that point, it is highly unlikely that he would survive
- The liberals would say that he was not viable, therefore, he was not technically alive
- And yet, he is filled with the Holy Spirit and has an emotional response to Mary's voice
- Mary has been pregnant for only a few days – Jesus is not much more than a tiny clump of cells
- Life begins at conception, and should be protected as precious before God
- In verse 42, Elizabeth confirms to Mary what the angel Gabriel told her
- This is one of the important roles of fellowship with other Christians, the confirmation, declaration, explanation of what God has said
- And then verse 43, Elizabeth wonders why Mary would visit her
- By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth knows who has been conceived in Mary's womb – 'my Lord' – the Messiah – the long-awaited savior of Israel
- Elizabeth finishes speaking with a beatitude
- **Luke 1:45**
- Maybe I am weird, but I wonder where Zacharias is when Elizabeth says this
- Mary believed the angel Gabriel and is blessed
- Zacharias has been mute and deaf for the last six months because he didn't believe what Gabriel announced to him
- What an encouragement this must have been for Mary
- Elizabeth believes Mary's impossible story, and Mary hasn't even told it to her yet
- Brothers and sisters, you need good Christian fellowship **Bruce Larson**

To be a Christian is to believe in a God who is the God of the impossible and to belong to a family of brothers and sisters who are there when you need them most.

- We all need people in our lives who believe in the God of the impossible, especially when the impossible is happening
 - What comes next in the text is referred by some as The Magnificat
 - Before I read it, I want to remind you that Mary is young, probably early teens – middle school aged
 - She came from a poor family, in a nothing town – probably illiterate
 - It makes what she says that much more remarkable
 - **Luke 1:46-55**
 - This reminds me that the ministry we do in the Children and Youth ministries is important
 - The Holy Spirit can fill a middle-school girl or boy just as easily as He can a pastor
 - If you want to find a place to serve, that has real eternal significance, get into the children or youth ministry
 - Mary begins by talking about what God has done with her
 - She admits that she was not who we might expect to be the mother of the Messiah
 - And then she describes what God intends to do in the world through her Son
 - When Jesus came, He turned the world upside down
 - He said things like **Matthew 16:24-25**
- If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**
- And **Mark 9:35**
- If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**
- 2,000 years ago, the world was not the way God wanted it to be
 - He sent Jesus to introduce change
 - To call people away from the path they were walking, back to God
 - This is another of the reasons why Christians need to be in fellowship with one another
 - When Spirit-filled Christians get together, beautiful, Spirit-filled things happen
 - We'll look at one more verse today, and then we will close
 - **Luke 1:56**
 - Mary stayed at Zacharias and Elizabeth's home for three months

- We know nothing about those three months
- What did they do – what did they talk about?
- As I thought about that, one of those ‘Oh wow’ moments occurred to me
- Mary had communed with God, and was filled with the Holy Spirit
- She needed fellowship with someone who would believe her and understand what she was going through, which she found in Elizabeth
- Mary needed something else – She needed discipleship
- She was Spirit-filled, but she was young – she needed someone to help her to understand what God had called her to do
- That is when it occurred to me that Elizabeth’s circumstances were no accident or random act of fate
- When Elizabeth was Mary’s age, betrothed to Zacharias, God closed her womb, so that she was unable to conceive
- And for the next 40 years or more, Elizabeth did not do what all the other wives her age were doing, she did not have and raise children
- Instead, she lived with her husband, the priest, and learned about the ways of God
- There is a verse that we usually only truly appreciate in the past tense
Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

- We know both Zacharias and Elizabeth had been struggling with it because they were still praying about it in their old age
- But it was Elizabeth’s barrenness that God used to prepare her to help the mother of the Savior of the world
- There was no one else on earth better prepared to disciple Mary than Elizabeth
- Forty plus years of misery for Elizabeth were transformed into good the moment Mary walked through the door and the child in her womb leaped for joy
- Nothing in this life is random, or an accident, or a mistake – at least not in God’s eyes
- God is supernaturally, sovereignly, providentially weaving a beautiful tapestry out of our life
- Every thread is important to the good that He is trying to work out

- The dark threads of sadness, disappointment, loss and the light threads of joy, happiness, and success all are used by God
- The strong threads of our good works and faith and combined with the weak threads of our mistakes, failures, and sins
- It is doubtful that Elizabeth could see that before Zacharias got back from Jerusalem and she conceived
- And I would not be surprised if you are having a hard time seeing good out of the difficult circumstances of your life
- But God is faithful to His people – He can be trusted to keep His Word
- Verse 56 ends saying that Mary ‘returned to her house’
- What was that like? After three months, she probably had a ‘baby bump’
- Three months earlier, she had left her home with the faith of communing with the living God
- And now she is returning home with her faith bolstered after fellowshiping with Elizabeth and strengthened by her discipleship
- Now she was better prepared to tell her impossible story to others
- We live in a time when people increasingly distrusting of large organizations, including religious organizations
- Something I have been sensing from the Lord and repeating is that no one needs religion, but everyone needs community
- As Christians, we need Christian community
- Something I sensed the Spirit say recently was that for community to happen, you have to show up – you have to go where community is happening
- The church does not exist to be religious
- Our role is facilitating community, but the only way for you to benefit from that is to show up
- If you look on ccfv.life you will see that there are lots of opportunities for community - Find something and show up
- If you don’t see something that is appealing to you, let us know what you would show up to and we will try to do it
- We all need the community of faith – begins by showing up
- Let’s pray!