

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"THE BLESSING & BOUNTY OF THE LORD'S COMING"

For individual study or discussion

DATE: December 5, 2021

SPEAKER: Joe/Frank

SERIES: Advent

PASSAGE: Luke 1:39-56

Family Dinner Table

How to Magnify God

by John Piper

There are two kinds of magnifying: microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying. The one makes a small thing look bigger than it is. The other makes a big thing begin to look as big as it really is.

When David says, "I will magnify God with thanksgiving," he does not mean, "I will make a small God look bigger than he is." He means, "I will make a big God begin to look as big as he really is."

We are not called to be microscopes. We are called to be telescopes. Christians are not called to be con-men who magnify their product out of all proportion to reality, when they know the competitor's product is far superior. There is nothing and nobody superior to God. And so the calling of those who love God is to make his greatness begin to look as great as it really is.

That's why we exist, why we were saved, as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The whole duty of the Christian can be summed up in this: feel, think, and act in a way that will make God look as great as he really is. Be a telescope for the world of the infinite starry wealth of the glory of God.

This is what it means for a Christian to magnify God. But you can't magnify what you haven't seen or what you quickly forget.

Therefore, our first task is to see and to remember the greatness and goodness of God. So we pray to God, "Open the eyes of my heart!" (Ephesians 1:18), and we preach to our souls, "Soul, forget not all his benefits!" (Psalm 103:2).

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

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Church Planting in India

"God's purposes and plans are first revealed in a private meeting between two women on the edge of society." N.T. Wright

The first chapter of Luke focuses on the moment before the entrance of the Christ child, where significant social, religious, cultural, and political events are taking place. The stage is set for the Lord's incarnation bringing God's bounty and blessing to the marginalized, the poor, and the outcasts of society, starting with two women who will play enormously important roles in the history of salvation.

In today's passage, both Elizabeth's exclamation of wonder and Mary's magnification of thanksgiving testify of God's divine grace as he remembers the "the humble estate" of his people (Psalm 136:23). These two women, who are in a lower social stratum in their day, are exalted by their miraculous and significant pregnancies.

Having learned from an angel that she will give birth to the Son of God, Mary hurries to visit her pregnant relative, Elizabeth, in the hill country. At Mary's greeting to Elizabeth, John leaps, acknowledging the significance of the child in Mary's womb. Elizabeth then both prophesies and blesses Mary.

- What is the significance of each statement in Elizabeth's greeting to Mary (vv. 42-45)?
- How did Mary respond to Elizabeth's greeting?

In Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting, we are reminded of God's covenant promises as she praises the attributes and works of God.

- What specific attributes of God does Mary draw attention to in verses 49-50?
- What works of God does Mary mention in verses 51-53?
- Read Genesis 22:16-18. How does God's promise to Abraham relate to the incarnation?

Jesus' incarnation is the ultimate demonstration of God's grace in the lives of his people, and we find that divine grace is the keynote of the whole narration of this meeting between Elizabeth and Mary, where God bestows divine favor on two unlikely recipients.

- What does Mary teach us about God's justice and mercy (vv. 51-53)?
- What can we learn here about Old Testament redemptive history? About God's faithfulness to keep his promises (54-55)?

Mary's song exalts the fulfillment of God's promises and his fidelity to the chosen people (vv. 54-55). Through the miraculous conceptions of both Elizabeth and Mary, God fulfills his promises with a superabundance of fidelity and generosity. Through the incarnation, he comes to the aid of the poor and lowly, fills the humble with grace, and gives good gifts to those who entrust their lives to him.

*Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.*