

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 1: 38-56

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 1, verses 38 to 56.

Verse 38: "Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."

The angel Gabriel announced to Mary a message of great joy, declaring that she was the virgin spoken of in Isaiah who would conceive and bear a son. For all humanity and for the entire nation of Israel, this was a message of great joy because it was the Messiah. But for a young woman who was already betrothed and not yet married, this was no easy matter.

At that time she and Joseph were betrothed, and according to the custom of the day, they needed a year to prove their purity to each other. If during this period the woman was found to be pregnant, according to the custom there were two options—public or private. If public, Joseph, under the law, could publicly demand to break the betrothal, and at that time the pregnant woman would be stoned to death. Luke does not record it, but Matthew records that Joseph was a just man; because he also loved Mary, he did not want to make her a public example, so he was minded to put her away secretly.

Very likely, right after the angel Gabriel announced this great joy to Mary, he immediately went to Joseph and told him that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit and that Joseph should proceed with the original plan to take Mary as his wife. Joseph was also a righteous man and a man who obeyed the Lord; he probably took Mary as his wife very quickly, giving Mary a home, giving Mary a legitimate name to protect her, and protecting the child in her womb.

Therefore, Mary's words, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word," express that she was willing to sacrifice, to be suspected, even to be shamed. We all know that in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, the first woman of humanity, Eve, was tempted by the serpent because she stepped out of the covering of Adam, thus bringing sin to all humanity and disrupting God's plan for man. At that time God promised that in the future the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.

Compared to Eve, Mary's purity, simplicity, and obedience are truly beautiful. All humanity was led into sin because of Eve's being tempted; but in the New Testament era, because of Mary's obedience, the Son of God Jesus Christ could be born into the world and begin His work of redemption.

Of course, for the young Mary, this matter was truly not easy. When she heard the angel tell her that her relative Elizabeth, who had been barren and unable to conceive, had also conceived, she immediately wanted to go visit Elizabeth.

Verses 39–40: "Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth."

Here we see that Luke's choice of words is very beautiful. After Mary heard the angel's announcement, there was a series of actions—arose, went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, entered the house of Zacharias, and then greeted Elizabeth. A chain of verbs connects these two sisters of beautiful character.

These two great mothers both experienced a miracle: one conceived the one who would end the Old Testament and become the forerunner of Christ; the other conceived the Savior of humanity, the Son of God Jesus Christ. Because of the obedience of these two sisters, hope was brought to human history.

Verses 41–42: “And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’”

The meeting of these two sisters seemed to need no narration or introduction; both their hearts were filled with the Holy Spirit, and both knew in their hearts. Therefore Elizabeth immediately brought forth a beautiful hymn of praise.

We must once again appreciate Luke—this Greek, this Gentile—with his excellent scientific training and literary attainment. Among the four Gospels, only Luke records Elizabeth’s hymn of praise, Mary’s hymn of praise, and later Zacharias’s hymn of praise. In Chinese we cannot detect it, but in the original texts they are completely presented in poetic form.

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, immediately brought forth a beautiful hymn of praise from within: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” Of course, she refers to Mary and Jesus Christ in Mary’s womb. The original of “the fruit of your womb” is “the fruit of your womb.” The Holy Spirit entered within man and bore fruit within—that is, the fruit of the Spirit. Elizabeth certainly knew this, so she called Mary blessed among women, and the fruit she bore, the fruit of the Spirit in her womb, is also blessed.

Verse 43: “But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Elizabeth knew very well that what Mary carried was her Lord, so she called Mary “the mother of my Lord.” Mary herself was not particularly great; her greatness lay in her obedience, which allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to be conceived in her womb.

It is the same with us today: every Christian actually has nothing remarkable, yet we are blessed because the Lord is within us. Once we have the Lord, we become

honorable; just as Mary, because she carried Jesus, became “the mother of my Lord.”

Verses 44–45: “For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Elizabeth’s hymn of praise focuses entirely on the child Mary carried—Jesus Christ. And this was not entirely from herself, but the child she carried, upon hearing Mary’s greeting, leaped for joy in her womb. It seems that John the Baptist, while still in his mother’s womb, was already worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ. Elizabeth was a person sensitive in spirit; she immediately brought forth a wonderful hymn of praise based on this worship. This hymn is the first hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This woman, who was still in the Old Testament era, composed the first hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ in human history.

From verse 46 to 55 is Mary’s response. This passage is generally called Mary’s Magnificat, and it is also completely in poetic form. If you are familiar with the Psalms, you will discover that in Mary’s hymn there is very little that is her own words; almost every verse comes from the Psalms. She was a woman very familiar with the Old Testament, especially with its hymns of praise. Therefore, when her spirit was moved, these words of praise naturally flowed out from within her.

Verses 46–47: “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’”

“My 心” in the original is my soul—my mind, emotion, and will; I am willing to magnify the Lord. When we set our mind on the Lord, our spirit will rejoice in God our Savior.

Verse 48: “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”

Mary knew very well that she was originally unworthy and lowly, yet because of her obedience, from now on all generations will call her blessed.

Verses 49–55: “For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 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 seed forever.”

If Elizabeth’s hymn of praise is the first hymn in the New Testament to the Savior Jesus, because she completely focused on the child she carried—Jesus Christ—and Jesus Christ brought a new era for humanity, the beginning of the New Testament; then Mary, on the other hand, inherits all the praises of God in the Old Testament and becomes the closing doxology of the Old Testament.

Especially in the Old Testament, God’s promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to David, and to the entire nation of Israel. At that time the people of Israel had been without a nation for 400 years, and God had not spoken to them for nearly 400 years. Yet through these two mothers of beautiful character, God opened a new era and closed an old era. Mary’s hymn closes the entire Old Testament; Elizabeth’s hymn opens the entire New Testament.

Verse 56: “And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.”

Through Luke's skillful arrangement, we see two pure sisters opening a brand-new page in the New Testament. With the praise from their mouths they declare that God has never forgotten His promises; and with the praise from their mouths they testify to the blessing they have received.

Let us pray together: Lord, yes, we also want to offer our praise as a sacrifice. Though we are but lowly people, Lord, You have chosen us, You have regarded us. You have given us divine life and lead us through daily living. Help us often, from our busy daily life, turn our eyes to look solely upon You. Know that You are not only the fountain of our salvation; You are also the fountain of our joy and the object of our praise and song. Help me live a life of thanksgiving and praises today. Thank You. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ!