

# Purpose!

## *Four Gifts of Christmas:*

Luke 1:46-55

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Bethany Church

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Can you imagine a fifteen year-old peasant girl, probably illiterate, speaking the words we just read?

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth 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 on those who fear Him from generation to generation.* (Luke 1:46-50, NKJV)

Something profound is happening. Something amazing is captivating her heart. This is more than teenage exuberance. It is God at work in a teenage heart. This God still works in the hearts of teenagers. I experienced it as a teenager and I still witness it in teenagers today.

Through the faith of this one teenage girl, God reshaped the entire world. As she acted in faith, the entire world received the gifts of Christmas. Of course, these gifts all arise from one gift, her son Jesus, who at the moment of this speech may have been conceived. God's Spirit certainly overshadowed her at this moment, as the angel had promised. Her heart sang. There is no way to know for sure, but I believe in this speech we are witnessing Christ's conception. Indeed, when the Spirit of God moves on people, so that faith and love arise in their hearts, there is a miraculous conception. The birth follows later as one walks in faith.

It is the nature of God your Father to act in such a way with you. As you see and hear things this Christmas season and turn to the Lord in faith, a new life is conceived in your heart

and later given birth as you walk in faith. We mentioned last week that this Christmas season signals an unfolding promise in the birth of Christ. The Bible declares:

***No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV)***

Let the lights, sounds and colors of Christmas direct you to understand, unwrap and utilize God's promises for you. They are many, and they are for your life now.

A second gift of Christmas is wrapped in the words of Mary. God is speaking to you when she says:

***From now on all generations will call me blessed... His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. (Luke 1:48, 50, NIV)***

Our generation does call Mary blessed, and the mercy that captured her extends to us. God is involved with us as he was involved then. This teenager talks about God's mighty deeds of mercy and continues:

***He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers. (Luke 1:51-55, NIV)***

Do you know what is imbedded in these words? Purpose! God is working in the affairs of individuals, families, peoples and nations. He is dealing with the proud and their hearts. He is exalting and removing the leadership of nations. He is changing the fortunes of families, and he is remembering and fulfilling the promises he has given to those who seek him. Christmas speaks of an unfolding purpose that affects the life of everyone one on this planet.

If we believe in the Christmas story, if we believe in the Christmas child, if we believe in the name of God's son, Jesus Christ, if we believe in the name Jesus which means savior, if we believe in the name Christ, which means anointed ruler, then there is no place among us for

hand-wringing, hopelessness, helplessness, or bitterness. We then are called to this day as we walk with the Savior. We then are called to this time as we serve the Christ. We then are called to these circumstances as we rely on Jesus' identity. We then are called to these relationships. If the time has been dark and confusing, get over it. That is not unique. If the circumstances have been difficult and painful, get over it. That is not unique either. Do you expect no one to fire at you on a battlefield? The private looks at his sergeant and exclaims, "They shoot back." If your relationships are hurtful, get over it. Bullets come from everywhere! The Apostle Paul had to publicly rebuke "Peter!" for destructive behavior. Paul and his "closest companion!" Barnabus got in a big argument and they separated for a time. Christians are ministers of reconciliation. If there was nothing to reconcile, we'd be out of that business and living in heaven.

The truth of God's unfolding purpose does not mean that every desire of God is fulfilled. The Bible teaches that God loves all, that he desires for all to repent, for no one to be lost.

***The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*** (2 Peter 3:9, NIV)

No, the Christmas trees and lights, ribbons and colors, the gifts themselves whether gaudy or commercialized, the gatherings and celebrations, even if they are impure, signify to you and me God's unfolding purpose in Christ. That purpose remembers God's promise of redemption. That purpose affects and even selects who rules and how long. That purpose goes to the heart of each individual and determines their course. It defines the fortunes of our families.

God's purposes are not justification for fatalism: "what will be will be;" instead, they are a call to faith and a call to act in faith. Every promise has a condition. You can be Moses who in unswerving obedience revealed the power of God; or you can be Pharaoh, who in his stubborn

unbelief also revealed the power of God. Either way God's power was revealed. I think Mordecai said it best to his young cousin Esther who as Queen of Persia faced a terrible decision:

***Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*** (Esther 4:13-14, NIV)

Even as the captive-peasant girl Esther rose to Queen of Persia to save a nation, and even as the faith of teenage Mary would nurture God's Son in this world, so God has an unfolding purpose in which you play a role. You have this gift of purpose. You have this gift, and a calling to be purposeful. You have a vital role in the salvation of the world. You are a player. What you pray makes a difference. What you don't pray makes a difference. What you say makes a difference. What you don't say makes a difference. What you do makes a difference. What you don't do makes a difference. What you believe makes a difference, and what you don't believe also makes a difference.

In Christmas God has given you a purpose that will affect individual hearts. In Christmas God has given you a purpose that will affect who rules, how long and when. In Christmas God has given you a purpose that affects the fortunes of your family for generations. You do not control other people, but you affect their lives forever. The simplest service changes hearts and destinies.

Do you see that in Christmas? Do you see your gift and calling? Do you see yourself in kingdom service of this Christ child? Does this Christmas season remind you of your reality and privilege? Does your soul magnify the Lord and rejoice in God your Savior, because he has noticed you and shown mercy?