

Elizabeth said to Mary ... “Behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy” (Luke 1:44).

Almighty God, you are the giver of all good things. Help us to be thankful for our many blessings, and to trust you in all areas of our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

As proof of God’s promise to Mary that she would bear a child, the angel Gabriel had told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was also with child. This, too, was an amazing conception, since Elizabeth was well past child-bearing age. When the women came together, they rejoiced at the favor God had shown them.

Read: Luke 1:39-56

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The word “Advent” means “coming.” The first couple chapters of Luke and Matthew serve as a prologue to the story of Jesus, focusing on the time just before and shortly after Jesus’ birth. This is what we refer to as Jesus’ *first coming*, when God took on flesh and became incarnate as a human being. Jesus’ *second coming* is when he will return again at the end of time.

Scripture tells us that John’s mother Elizabeth and Jesus’ mother Mary were relatives (Luke 1:36), which makes Jesus and John cousins. Both women experienced unexpected pregnancies.

When Mary showed up at Elizabeth’s home, it was likely a happy surprise. It is interesting that Elizabeth’s unborn baby knew Mary’s news even before Elizabeth did. This points forward to the way that John would prepare the way for Jesus and make him known!

Discussion Questions

1. Read the lead-up to this story in Luke 1:35-38. How did Mary and Elizabeth know each other? Why would Mary have been motivated to go and see Elizabeth? How would this serve to confirm the promise made to Mary herself?
2. Which couple was older, Mary and Joseph or Zechariah and Elizabeth? Why were each of these pregnancies something unique and special?
3. What was it that caused Elizabeth to cry out upon seeing Mary? How is this similar to the way God worked through the prophets of old? Compare 2 Peter 1:21.
4. Who is the person Elizabeth refers to as “my Lord” in verse 43? Had she ever met this person?
5. The poetic passage in verses 46-55 are known as the Magnificat (from the word “magnify”). What is the overarching theme of these verses? Why do you think these words have been set to music so often in Christian history? Can you find these words in your church’s hymnal?
6. Who is the primary actor in verses 46-55? How is this also the case in our relationship with God? In what way does this tie back to the same definition of grace found in the angel’s first greeting to Mary: “Greetings, O favored one” (Luke 1:28)?
7. Was Mary chosen because she was better than all the other young women of that time? How do Mary’s own words in the Magnificat express her thoughts on that question?