

Luke 1:39-46

Sermon: **A soul of a person**

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JOB'S REALIZATION

1. Last time I spoke about the wisdom we gain through suffering. It was never my intention for you to conclude that if you suffer intensely, then you must still have much to learn. If I left that impression—please forgive me.

1.1. The Book of Job challenges such a view. Job was righteous before God, and God Himself asked Satan: *"Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth¹."* Yet Job still went through terrible suffering, pain, and the loss of his loved ones.

In that process, he demanded that God explain why all this was happening to him. At the end of the book, God answers him—but not in the way Job expected. God tells him: *"You cannot now understand why you suffer. You do not know how many lives your suffering will touch. Your story is interwoven with countless other stories, and I alone know why it all had to happen, and for whom it had to happen. You are too small, Job. Only I know the end of these stories. And how do I know? Because I wrote them—I am the Author of all existence."*

1.2. In the end, Job realizes how great God truly is, and how small he is. He repents, asks for forgiveness, and accepts the role for which God had placed him. In other words, even though his life was bitter to him and he wanted to die, he now knew that his suffering was not in vain—that God was using it, and would continue to use it in the future, to accomplish His plans and purposes in this reality. And one of God's plans is to give His kingdom as an inheritance to those who belong to Him.

1.3. The Book of Job has a powerful influence on me. Job certainly never knew that his story would bring me the psychological and spiritual stability I have today. But God knew—because He is the Author—and He knew Job's story would be a comfort to me. In the same way, through the role I

¹ (Job 1:8)

carry, I see how God uses my story to affect the lives of those around me: my wife, my children, my parents, my extended family, friends, acquaintances... All of them are confronted with my story, which calls them to ask questions of existential importance.

1.4. My children, confronted with their father's condition, are quickly stepping into responsibilities that most children their age don't have to face. My wife, pressed by burdens that deny her the pleasures other wives enjoy, is becoming a wise, steady, courageous, and humble woman whose focus is on being there for others rather than for herself—just like her Lord, Jesus Christ.

1.5. There are countless other examples where I can see how God is working through my story in the lives of others—and perhaps will continue to do so even after I am gone. Why do I say my story may still affect someone in the future, when I am no longer here? Because I have decided to put into writing and into audio recordings the role God has given me. Perhaps one day, through my story, someone will be led to Job—and then, in the end, to Christ, and to our God the Father.

1.6. Before we continue with the biblical text, I want to say this: the purpose of our lives is to accept the role (the cross) God has assigned to us, and to fulfill it to the end. We must desire to glorify the holy and good God, who at the end of our journey will give us what our hearts long for. And that is: a morally good nature, and a life free from sorrow and evil.

1.7. A life in which we will grow step by step into perfect human beings, surrounded by a reality that provides everything we need to fulfill the unexplored and inexhaustible potential for which we were created. And we were created to glorify our God and to proclaim to the rest of reality:

"Look how perfect our God is, look how good and merciful our God is, look at what He has given us. Is it even possible? O Yahweh, how great and mighty You are!"

THE MEETING OF MARY AND ELIZABETH

2. (Luke 1:39) **"Mary set out quickly for the hill country."** Why? In the previous passage, the angel told Mary: *"Not only will you bear a child who will be called the Son of the Most High, but your relative Elizabeth, who is advanced in years, has also conceived a son. This is now the sixth month of her pregnancy²."*

Mary must have been overjoyed for her cousin. She knew how much Elizabeth had prayed for God to bless her with a child. But at the same time, Mary must have thought: *"I must go, I must hurry and see, and if this is true, then everything the angel told me will surely come to pass."* And so Mary quickly set out for the hill country.

2.1. Nazareth was in Galilee, while the town of Judah was further south, below Jerusalem. At that time one had to travel through the hill country along the Jordan River, cross the river, then continue toward Jerusalem—which itself is set upon the hills—and only after that descend toward the town of Judah.

² (Luke 1:36)

2.2. **(Luke 1:40–43)** Mary greets Elizabeth, and the child leaps in Elizabeth’s womb. At that moment, Elizabeth makes a clear declaration that the fruit of Mary’s womb is blessed. Let’s slow down here. There are two possibilities:

1. Elizabeth understood what was happening through the Scriptures and the testimony of her husband Zechariah, and the Holy Spirit gave her the heart to connect it all.
2. The Holy Spirit gave her a direct revelation of who the child in Mary’s womb truly was. By direct revelation, I mean the kind received by the prophets in the Old Testament, or like the one her husband Zechariah received when he was in the Holy of Holies.

2.3. Between Mary’s greeting and the baby’s leap of joy in Elizabeth’s womb, we unfortunately have no indication that Mary had already explained everything that had happened to her. In **(Luke 1:45)** we read that Elizabeth says: **“Blessed is she who believed.”** How could Elizabeth have known all this if Mary had not told her?

It’s possible Mary shared it with her between the greeting and the baby’s leap. Or perhaps Mary had sent Elizabeth a letter before setting out on her journey. Either way, I personally believe that Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, connected the pieces and understood what was happening.

2.4. The reason I take this view is that the text never directly implies that Elizabeth received a revelation from God in the same way we read in other passages of the Old and New Testaments, where God, the Lord Jesus Christ, or angels speak directly to people. We know that both Zechariah and Mary received direct appearances of the angel, who told them what would happen. In Elizabeth’s case, the text does not indicate such an encounter.

2.5. This does not mean I rule out the possibility that “filled with the Holy Spirit” here could mean exactly that—that Elizabeth received a direct revelation from God and spoke prophetically. But for me personally, the first explanation feels more compelling.

BLESSED

3. **(Luke 1:42)** The word “blessed” in Greek is *eulogemene*, which means to wish someone well, to think well of someone. Let me give an example: during my childhood, a priest would come to bless the house after the holidays. We believed that through that act God would protect us, give us food on the table, health, and well-being in every way. Food is good, health is good, peace and days without war are good.

And as Christians we should be aware of where all this ultimately comes from. From God – that’s what we would all answer. And that is true. But why does God give us blessing? Because He desires good for us.

As Christians we need to be aware that without Him, if He does not decide so, nothing can exist. That is the biblical perspective.

3.1. Ok, let's return to the text. In this context, God desires good for Mary; He cares for her well-being. Out of all the women in Israel's history, she received the grace to be the mother of the Son of the Most High.

The text continues: **"Blessed is the fruit of your womb."**

A question arises: why does God desire good for the child in Mary's womb? Why does Elizabeth say that the child is blessed? Why does that child need blessing?

Personally, I find Elizabeth's words strange. I was taught that Jesus is God. Then why does Jesus, who is God, need blessing? Does it not belong to Him automatically by His divine status?

3.2. Through Christian history, I believe we have lost sight of who Jesus truly is. He is the visible image of the invisible God, He is the human being who carries the authority of God the Father, who exists outside this reality—His Old Testament name is Yahweh.

3.3. Jesus is God above all gods, King above all kings. That is biblical truth.

But where did the Church go wrong? His divinity was constantly emphasized, while the reality of His humanity was neglected. He is also, as Paul says in (Colossians), "the firstborn of all creation."

Elizabeth here speaks of a human being who received blessing from God—the central role for which all of reality was created. He is the Son of God the Father. There has never been, and never will be, a more important person in human history, present, or future than Jesus Christ. — All things were created for Him. —

3.4. Let me point something else out: let's try to put ourselves in the minds of people throughout church history, who were taught that Jesus is God, while at the same time His humanity was diminished.

It's no wonder that in that process people began to connect intellectually and spiritually on a personal level with someone who was human, someone who understood them—such as Mary, the saints, the apostles, and so on.

In their minds, as they heard the message of the Gospel from the priest, this thought likely echoed: *"Jesus is God, He is not a man like me, He does not understand my problems, my suffering, He is God. He is not afraid, He does not get tired, nothing is impossible for Him."*

3.5. But when we read the Gospels and watch Jesus' life, we see that He too was afraid, that He was tired, disappointed, angry, thirsty, hungry, and in the end, in great pain. We see that He completely depended on the Father's will, not His own.

One of the greatest failures of the Church throughout history has been diminishing the humanity of Jesus Christ. If you interpret Jesus' life through the lens of: *"He came by His works and teaching primarily to prove that He is God,"* I personally believe you will miss the essence and core of everything He did and taught.

TWO LORDS

4. **(Luke 1:43)** The word "Lord" means Master. It is a title that belongs both to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ. God, as the Master of all things, decided to give everything as an inheritance to

His Son Jesus, who is the image of Him, the invisible God. Jesus deserves the same treatment from people that God the Father receives, because He is the Master of all creation—He represents the authority of the invisible God in the visible created order.

Elizabeth recognizes this, and that is why she says to Mary: *“The mother of my Lord—Jesus, my Messiah—comes to me.”* This is an act of humility on Elizabeth’s part.

4.1. **(Luke 1:44)** Here is my suggestion of how all this unfolded: Mary told Elizabeth everything, and while Elizabeth was listening, she experienced something deeply personal—a sign within her womb. She received confirmation that everything Mary said was true, and because of that, she was overwhelmed with joy.

The experience Elizabeth had meant a great deal to her personally, but to someone else it might mean nothing.

4.2. Let me give you my own example. When I was in Lika, I prayed to God to give me a sign that He was with me, that He would not leave me alone while I was going through the most intense and dramatic moments of my life. While I was reading the Bible, a white butterfly landed on my hand and stayed there for 45 minutes. I will never, for as long as I live, forget that experience.

The circumstances, the place, and all the events leading up to it came together in that moment. But when I retell this experience, I know that the person listening will never feel what it meant to me. I think something similar happened to Elizabeth.

4.3. Of course, our experiences must always be tested. Where do they come from? Is someone trying to deceive us? Is “the father of lies,” as Jesus calls him, trying to use our experiences to pull us away from God? That is always a possibility.

But through a devoted heart, through reason, logic, and Scripture, we can discern it. In the wisdom we gain by studying the Word, we can recognize and resist such traps more quickly and more firmly.

FORTUNATE

5. **(Luke 1:45)** The word “blessed” in the Bible often means that someone is “fortunate” or “lucky”. Why does Elizabeth here use the third person: *“Blessed is she who believed”*? Why doesn’t she simply say: *“Blessed are you, Mary”*?

I believe Elizabeth is broadening the meaning of her statement to all women—or rather, to all people—who are fortunate. Who are they? They are those who believe in God’s promises, those who dedicate their lives to walking in step with those promises. These are the people who will in the end receive blessing from God—and that blessing is eternal life.

Yes, Elizabeth is speaking to Mary, but the principle is universal. She herself, along with her husband Zechariah, had received blessing. They are blessed because they believed God’s promises. – In other words, lucky are those who believe in God’s promises. –

5.1. This is the most important question every human being must answer: *“Do I believe in God’s promises or not?”* Those who do not believe, who reject them as truth, go toward their destruction. But those who believe enter into eternal life—and that is why they are called “blessed.”

5.2. What else lies behind Elizabeth's words to Mary: *"Blessed is she who believed"*?

In (Luke 2:34–35) we read that Simeon speaks to Mary, the mother of Jesus:

"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be opposed—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also."

These verses make it clear: Mary, the mother of the future Messiah, was not immune to the question of who Jesus truly is. In other words, Simeon was saying this to Mary: *"If you do not believe in God's promises as they are fulfilled in His life and ministry, you too will fall, just like the others."*

5.3. And that is why Elizabeth says to Mary: *"Whoever believes in God's promises, whoever believes in who Jesus is and why He came to earth—that person is truly blessed."*

A SOUL OF A PERSON

6. My mother would say: "A soul of a person" when someone was dear to her. But who actually has a soul?

6.1. (Luke 1:46) Here we see Mary's response to Elizabeth's declaration. We see her humility and her deep gratitude toward God. She realizes what a great gift God has given her.

God universally gives His blessing to every human being because He is a good God. He never stops giving. But unfortunately, the tendency of most people is to reject that gift. We don't want that gift.

6.2. We see here that Mary mentions the *soul*. What does that word mean in this context?

I believe this: there are many people who outwardly acknowledge the existence of God, who intellectually come to the realization that everything we see with our eyes must have been created by someone. Some believe simply because their parents raised them that way.

But inwardly, in the very core of their being—in other words, in their soul—they don't actually believe it.

6.3. The soul Mary speaks of is who we truly are. Some of us, in our soul, believe in God and His promises, and that transforms us. We begin to live and to absorb everything that comes from God: truth, patience, meekness, mercy, goodness, a sense of justice, humility, and love for our neighbor—another child of God.

— And most importantly, we begin to listen to our God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. —

6.4. The culture we live in (our neighbors, friends, brothers, sisters, mothers, politicians, the news, books of various philosophers, gurus, motivational teachers) no longer has the same influence on us as it does on the majority of people living on this planet. Their opinion matters less and less to us every day. We see how foolish it is to trust worldly wisdom. They don't have the answers to life's essential questions. They never have.

— In contrast to the rest of the world, we are aware (just like Mary) that God has called us to be heirs of His kingdom. And because of that, our soul rejoices. —