

The God of the Remnant

Luke, Pt. 3

Luke 1:39-56

Allan McCullough

Grace Hill Church

December 15, 2019



I. PRAYER

II. INTRODUCTION

a. I have a question...

- i. Can someone be a Christian and vote for the Democratic Nominee for President instead of President Trump in 2020?
 - Temperature just went up in the room didn't it?
- ii. Do Christians have to be republicans?
 - Do Christians have to be democrats?
 - There are people on both sides who say that their party is more "Christian" than the other.
- iii. Can you be a Christian and consume alcohol?
 - Can you be a Christian and be gay?
 - Can you be a Christian and think marriage is exclusively between a man and a woman?
- iv. Can you be rich...like really rich...drive nice cars...live in a big house...and a Christian at the same time?
 - Some would say not, and many would say yes!
- v. Can you be really poor and be a Christian at the same time.
 - Some say poverty is the result of a lack of wisdom or a lack of faith.
- vi. Can you be a Christian and not believe or submit to everything in the Bible?
 - Or must Christians accept the total inerrancy of the Bible?



b. If you were to poll all of Christendom with these questions, there would be passionate disagreement.

- i. There are Christians who say it is demonic not to support our current President.
 - And there are Christians who say that it is the epitome of hypocrisy to support our current President.
 1. What's the answer?
 - On all the issues I just raised, you will find hyper-polarized opinions complete with assassination of character and motive if you don't agree...and you will also find people that don't draw hard lines really on anything.
- ii. **So, you have this big circle and inside that circle are all the people in the world and through all of history that identify as a Christian.**
 - But within that circle are all kinds of different opinions and beliefs about what it means to be a Christian.
 - There are all kinds of groups, factions, denominations, and schisms and many of those different groups accuse other groups of not belonging in the circle...they draw these hard lines on issues like politics, or doctrine, or morality...and say that their group is the group that is most pure and accuse other groups of not being Christian at all.



iii. And this isn't true just for the church.

- Even if we were to look back at the Nation of Israel in the Bible...you would see the same thing.

c. And so, this morning we are going to be studying the next passage in the Gospel of Luke.

- ****Remember, we started a long study of the Gospel of Luke two weeks ago. We're just walking verse by verse through the book.****

1. And during these weeks of Advent before Christmas, we are studying Luke 1-2 which record the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

i. The next passage in Luke records this interaction between Mary, who is pregnant with Jesus, and her relative Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist.

- And during this interaction, Mary has a moment where she sings to God.

ii. And in this song, traditionally referred to as the Magnificat, Mary proclaims how Jesus, as the Messiah, is going to show his mercy to some and to others, He will be their downfall.

- See, Jesus did not come to be the Messiah for everyone. Jesus did not come to be the Messiah for all who claim to be in this circle we call Christian.
 1. No, actually the Bible has always observed that, yes, there is this big circle of people who claim to belong to God...
 2. ...and then there is this smaller circle of people who the Bible refers to as the remnant...the true people of God.



- See, not everyone who claims to be in the big circle is truly a part of the remnant.
 1. Yes, there **are** some perimeters when it comes to who is of God and who isn't.
 2. And Mary's song is going to help us understand what those perimeters are and what it means to be a part of the remnant.
- And here is what we are going to discover...the difference between the remnant and the rest of the circle of people who claim to be Christian...is that the remnant fear God above all else.
 1. Now, this word fear in Scripture, it's a bit different.
 2. To fear God means humble, reverent obedience.
 3. To know your place before God. He is Lord. He is master.
- iii. **And before we continue, I just want to say to those of you who may not consider yourself a Christian or maybe your exploring what you believe...**
- Pollsters in America have observed that it is exactly this kind of inconsistency within the church that is causing so many people to be skeptical about the church.
 1. And so, my hope for you this morning, is that I can present to you a pure and compelling picture of what it means to worship and follow Jesus and what it looks like when that gets distorted.
- Because yes, there is a lot of distortions out there.



III. **LUKE 1:39-56**

a. **There are two parts to this text. The scene where Mary visits Elizabeth and then the song Mary sings during that visit.**

- i. So, Mary makes her way to Elizabeth's home and in this clip that we get of when Mary arrives, we get a picture of what the remnant looks like.
 - And let me describe this to you because the attitude and the conduct of the remnant is vastly different than those who claim they belong to God but are not of the remnant.
 1. There are three characteristics of the remnant that I think we see displayed in Mary and Elizabeth.
- ii. **The first characteristic is humility.**
 - Picture the scene...Mary arrives and in her womb is the Son of God...in the form of a human embryo.
 1. And John, who is about 6 months in the womb of Elizabeth, does what God has called Him to do...he announces the arrival of the Messiah through a leap of joy in Elizabeth's womb.
 2. And Elizabeth receives that prophetic announcement and is filled with the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Son of God, the Messiah that her people have been waiting for, was in her house.
 4. And the humility of Elizabeth is apparent in v.43 where Elizabeth is overcome by the fact that she gets the privilege of being a part of this moment.



- Mary had the same kind of humility in v.48 when she talks about her humble estate.
 1. We also see it in v.47 when she claims that God is her Savior! She was in touch with her need for salvation.
 - One thing is certain, neither Mary nor Elizabeth felt entitled to such blessing and favor from God. They feared God.
 1. This is a key characteristic of the remnant...one of humble gratitude toward God not proud entitlement.
- iii. **The second characteristic we see is submission.**
- It is common for us to refer to God and Jesus as “*Lord*” in the church.
 1. So, when we read v.43 and that Elizabeth refers to Jesus as her Lord, it kind of goes over our heads a bit.
 2. But it’s a big deal that Elizabeth refers to Jesus as her Lord in this text.
 3. She is making a confession that Jesus is her God, her Messiah, her true King.
 - Mary does the same thing in our text from last week when she says in v.38...
 1. God, I submit to your will. I sit under your Word. I don’t question your Word.
 - The remnant is comprised of those who submit to and fear God as King and they do not fear anyone else or look to anyone else to be their king.
- iv. **The third and last characteristic we see in this text is joy.**
- This scene with Elizabeth and Mary with John the Baptist leaping in the womb is a joyful scene.
 1. Their hearts are filled with gladness that God is moving in their midst.



2. Mary proclaims her joy in **v.46-49**.

- See, the Remnant finds their joy in Christ and do not look to the things of this world to find joy.

b. These three characteristics are what describe the remnant...humility, submission, and joy.

- When you look at the people of God. When you look at Christians. When you look at the church. These three characteristics should be obvious.
 1. And if you look at the big circle of people who claim to be Christian, I don't think they're obvious.
- i. **And as we look deeper into Mary's song...we are going to see how these three characteristics are produced from fearing God above anything else in the world.**
 - Because that is the mark of the true church, a true Christian, and the remnant...fear of God.
 1. And the question that we need to ask ourselves as we study this song is...do I fear God or do I fear other things?
 2. Does my life reflect the characteristics of the Remnant or have I distorted what it means to be a Christian as well?

IV. THE MAGNIFICAT

a. So, let's look deeper at this song from Mary.

- i. We read the opening verses of the song and observed Mary's humility, submission, and joy.



- But through the rest of the song, v.50-54, we're going to see the difference between the Remnant and the rest of the circle.
- Verses 50 and 54 will give us a definition of the remnant and verses 51-53 will explain the difference.

b. So, let's start with verses 50 and 54. Here, we get a few identifying statements of those whom Jesus has come to be the Messiah. Read v.54.

- i. Let me make this plain for everyone.
- As you read the Bible, you have two groups of people...God's people and the rest of the world.
 1. God's people worship God, the rest of the world does not.
 - In the Old Testament, God chose a nation to be His people.
 1. That was Israel.
 2. Abraham is the Father of Israel...all Israel can trace their ancestral line back to Abraham.
 - And out of this nation comes the Messiah, Jesus. And Jesus makes a way for all people among all nations to become a part of the "people of God."
 1. Paul explains to us in the book of Galatians, that when you place your faith in Jesus, you are attached to Jesus.
 2. And Jesus is the offspring of Abraham.
 3. And because you are attached to Jesus through faith, you are now an offspring of Abraham.



- And so now in the New Testament, this group of people who are called the “People of God” is not just limited to a nation, it is all people who have faith in Jesus.
 1. This is what we call the church. The church is comprised of all people who trust in Jesus and have now joined the “people of God.”
- ii. **So, in v.54 when Mary says that her child, Jesus, would show mercy to Israel, Abraham, and his offspring forever...**
 - She just doesn't have Old Testament Israel in mind, she is also talking about the church in the future.
 1. You are included in this!
 - So, when we talk about the remnant, we are talking about everyone who is truly a part of God's people...everyone from Israel through the church.

c. Now, that is still a big circle, right? Well, let's jump back to v.50, because we're going to narrow that circle even more. Read v.50.

- i. Now, that is a very important statement. The mercy of Jesus will be for those who fear God.
 - Not everyone. Not all who claim to belong to God. Now all in the nation of Israel. Not everyone who goes to church. Not everyone in the big circle. But those who fear God.
 - And in the Old Testament, these people, who actually fear God and trust in Him, were referred to as the remnant.



1. Isaiah 10:22 as quoted by Paul in Romans 9:27 - *“Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved.”*
- ii. So, you have people who claim to be the people of God, yet they do not fear God and then you have people who do fear God.
 - And in v.51-53, Mary sings about what her child, Jesus, will do for the remnant, for those who fear God.
 1. And she is going to give us three examples of what it looks like to fear God and what it looks like to not fear God.
 2. The true difference between the remnant and the rest of the circle.

V. #1 - THE REMNANT TRUSTS IN JESUS AS ITS SAVIOR. V.51

- a. Now, when you study the life of Jesus, you'll notice that Jesus went after those who were “proud” all of the time.
 - i. Yet, he didn't go after “the world” when it came to their pride.
 - He went after those who claimed to be in the Big Circle.
 1. He went after those who took pride in their religion.
 - ii. And Mary says that Jesus will scatter the proud and show Himself to be strong.
 - See, a key distinction of those in the big circle who are not of the remnant is they are arrogant and trust in themselves.



1. While those a part of the remnant, as displayed by Mary and Elizabeth, are humble and trust in Jesus.

b. When you look at the church today, there is a lot of pride.

- i. There are a lot of people who like to puff up their chest and display their righteousness so that the world can see...much like the Pharisees of Jesus' day.
 - And this is both on the right and the left. Both with conservatives and liberals.
- ii. On one hand, there is a huge portion of the church that is most loud about their morality...
 - They are the ones who champion marriage, they are the ones who champion biblical sexuality, they are the ones who preach the family values and expect those who have never heard the gospel to abide by it...
 1. And although we may agree with some of their values, we hear way more about their righteousness than their Savior.
- iii. It's the same on the left...
 - They champion inclusion, love, diversity...they preach how the other side is archaic and hateful....and yet they...in their righteousness, are the enlightened ones.
 1. And although some of their causes are worth listening to, you don't hear much about a Savior.

c. See, the remnant, as displayed by Mary and Elizabeth, is marked by humility.



- i. They don't say: Look at my righteousness! Look at my values! Look at how I am so much more enlightened than all those people!
 - They say look at my savior.
- ii. See, the proud scatter at the true Gospel of Jesus because the true Gospel of Jesus says...you've all missed the mark.
 - And Jesus has come to give of Himself on the cross so that you could be forgiven of your sin.
 1. This is how he will truly help Israel and the church, this is how he will show his mercy and his strength...by saving you from your sin.
 2. But, if you want to receive His mercy, you must fear Him.
 3. You must confess that you are not righteous. You are not enlightened. You are not strong.
 4. You are a sinner in need of Savior who will show his strength with his arm and conquer your sins for you.

d. See, if you ever see those who claim to be Christians...in the big circle...

- i. ...point to and speak of their own righteousness, their own causes, how they are better than those other people...
 - Whenever you see them push morality on the world before they proclaim the gospel.
 - Whenever you see them speak of values before they speak of a Savior.



- I don't think you're dealing with the remnant.
- As God says to Israel in Zephaniah 3:11a-12.
 1. *"I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.¹² But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord."*

VI. #2 – THE REMNANT TRUSTS IN JESUS AS ITS KING. V.52.

- a. **You know, all through the Bible, God tells His people that one day, He will make all things new and establish his Kingdom.**
 - i. He told Israel that He was their true King and one day the Messiah would come and establish His Kingdom.
 - He tells the church that we are strangers and exiles in this land, our citizenship is in heaven, and one day Christ will return and setup His Kingdom where we will live forever.
 1. And Jesus will be the perfect ruler over that Kingdom.
 - ii. **But, the people of God are told to wait for Him.**
 - That no mere human can be this King.
 - Only Jesus can be this King and we are to wait for Him.



b. But for many in the nation of Israel and for many in the church, we don't want to wait...we want to try and establish this Kingdom now through worldly institutions and worldly politics.

- i. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was established under the rule of God's Word.
 - But the people of Israel decided they did not want to be ruled by God's Word, they wanted to be ruled by a worldly king like the rest of the nations.
 1. Go read 1 Samuel. They wanted a King who would be tall, handsome, strong, who will stand up to adversaries, fight our battles...you know the kind who will punch back.
 2. And when one of Israel's prophets, Samuel, warned them against putting a human King over them, they did not listen.
 3. And look at what God says to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:7 - *"And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."*

c. If you look at the church today, sometimes it's hard to know where the politics starts and stops.

- i. How come all of the sudden the word evangelical is now used to describe a voting block that issues endorsements?



- Why do we have “leaders” in the church assassinating the character of other people in the church because they don’t align politically?
 - Why is it that Christians apart of one political party accuse Christians who lean toward the other party of not being truly Christian?
 - Why is my newsfeed filled with Christians who have a fire in their belly about politics...about a worldly King...and that’s it?
- ii. **As one member of President Trump’s evangelical advisory council said about the 2016 election:**
- *“...this election is not a battle between Republicans and Democrats. It’s a battle between good and evil, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness...”*
 - What?!? This is a pastor. Why are we attaching apocalyptic and religious language to an American election?
 1. You know how biblically ignorant that is?
 2. It’s almost as if we have forgotten that we are waiting for our true King to return and we’ve decided to look to worldly Kings now...you know to fight our battles and protect our liberty.
 3. We don’t fear God, we fear a political party!
 4. And this is not just the right, the left is just as guilty when it comes to looking to worldly leaders to bring hope and change.



d. Brothers and sisters, I know I am stepping on some toes, but the remnant makes no political alliances.

- i. And many of us need to check our hearts on this one...
- ii. We have a King. He has come to save us. He will return to make all things new. And he will bring down the mighty from their thrones.
 - That doesn't mean we don't engage politically.
 - But as Mary and Elizabeth displayed for us, in every part of our lives, we submit in all things to our true King.
 - We fear Jesus.
 - Our trust is in Jesus, and Jesus alone. No political party or ruler has the allegiance of the remnant.
 1. No matter what any earthly King says.
 2. No matter what the culture says.
 3. No matter if persecution is coming.
 4. No matter if other "Christians" tell us we should do otherwise.
 - We wait for our King to return and our hope is in Him and Him alone.

VII. #3 – THE REMNANT TRUSTS IN JESUS AS ITS PORTION. V.53.

a. What has been the theme so far for the remnant?

- The remnant looks to Jesus as its Savior, not themselves.
- The remnant looks to Jesus as its King, not worldly kings.



- i. And so here, the remnant looks to Jesus to satisfy their souls, and not money or material things.
- See, as you read the Scripture, both the Old Testament laws and the New Testament, we see a consistent message when it comes to our money.
 1. That message is not that we shouldn't have it.
 2. It's not that we shouldn't earn it.
 3. It's that we should hold on to it loosely and not look to it to satisfy or bring joy to our souls.
- ii. See, when we look to our money and possessions to be our portion...to bring us joy...then we fear money and not God.
- Look at what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 6 -
 1. *"¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."*
 - It is a good thing for those who truly fear God to have access to money. Because, they won't look to that money to satisfy their soul, they'll invest that money in the way the Lord instructs them.



1. The Scripture never speaks of money as a reward for those who are faithful. It always speaks of money as something to steward out of worship to God.
- iii. **And we have a lot of people in this Big Circle who claim to be Christian...but how many of us fear money or the lack of money over God?**
- Because, at the end of the day, those who look to money to be their portion, will walk away empty.
 1. And those who look to Jesus to be their portion will be filled for eternity.
 - There is abundant joy in putting everything on the table...and like Mary and Elizabeth...allow our souls to enjoy being in the center of God's will.
 1. But our fear of money will hold us back.

VIII. CONCLUSION

a. The remnant of God...

- i. They trust in Jesus as their Savior, not their own morality.
- ii. They trust in Jesus as their King, not worldly politics.
- iii. They trust in Jesus as their portion, not their money.

b. These three idols were a problem for Israel and if I can be honest, I think they are a problem for American Evangelicalism.

- i. We, here at Grace Hill, would call ourselves evangelical.



- Historically, to be evangelical means to believe in the inerrancy of God's Word and to be focused on the Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel to the lost.
- ii. But, that word has been hijacked and I believe that American Evangelicalism has three idols that need to be taken out back...
 - Moral Pride
 - Politics
 - Money

c. So, as an evangelical church, instead of pointing the finger, let's look to ourselves.

- i. Where might some of these idols have a hold of our heart?
 - Jesus has come. He will scatter the proud. He will bring down rulers from their thrones. He will send the rich away empty.

d. But, here is the good news about the Remnant...

- i. It's not an exclusive club. It's open to anyone who would humble themselves before God, accept His grace, and submit to His Word.
 - Grace Hill, let's be that remnant here in Herndon and Northern Virginia.
 - Let's display the glory of Christ, and how He is trustworthy, by truly trusting in Him and no one else.
- ii. Let's be a humble church that doesn't flaunt our righteousness but points all who will listen to our Savior.



- iii. Let's be a church that puts all our hope in the King of Kings in heaven and not an earthly King or political system or party.
- iv. Let's be a church that looks to Jesus for our joy and not the things of this world.
- e. If we want people to come to Christ in this town, then this town needs a remnant.**

IX. PRAY

