

LEAPING FOR JOY

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Evening – 18th December 2022

Reading: Luke 1: 26-45. (v44)

In this narrative we have two expectant mothers. They are six months apart in terms of the stage of their pregnancies. Mary stays with Elizabeth three months before she returns to Nazareth. When the baby, in Elizabeth's womb, destined to be John the Baptist, hears the voice of Mary, he leaps for joy. Elizabeth interprets this action and prophecies about it.

1. Life begins at conception.

John was a person in the womb. He was known to God and known to his mother. There is not a time when the child in the womb is not a person. He is in the process of becoming the person he already is. People talk of 'the products of conception' to try to hide from view that this is a person in the womb. People try to suppress the truth by using words to try to hide the truth.

John was filled with the Spirit in the womb, something that can only happen to someone who is a person. John, in the womb, already had dimensions of awareness and ability to respond. Babies can pick up stress in the outside environment. They are also able, as we see with John, to leap for joy.

2. Are we leaping for joy?

If an unborn baby can leap for joy in the presence of the Lord Jesus, also in the womb, then what of us? It does not have to be an outward response but a response of the heart.

We have to admit that Christmas is not always a time of joy. We can have many sad memories. We might remember those who are not there anymore. We might be

reminded of family breakdowns. Or else the world situation, such as in Ukraine or China, might come to our attention. We might think about our communities and the lack of spiritual response to the gospel. It is also a time when we might think about our health or our finances.

Sometimes we are perplexed at ourselves. Why are we not more joyful? Why is there little sense of rejoicing in our souls? Joy is very fragile. Other things grow more readily in our souls. We can be too fearful, too busy, too bowed down, too driven, or too inhibited. We are sometimes very slow in expressing the joy we have within.

3. Some reasons for joy.

John was always well tuned into the voice of the Lord Jesus (John 3: 28-30). His joy was complete when He heard the voice of the Lord Jesus who had come into the world to do the work He was uniquely called to do. He had come to bring eternal life (v34), the rejection of which would leave the person exposed to the wrath of God. He was the one to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29 and 35).

As a lamb, He was innocent, harmless, and sinless. But He was destined to die (Isaiah 53:7). He submitted Himself to this death. As a baby it was prophesied what would happen to Him and to His mother (Luke 2:34-35). Mary had to surrender this 'lamb' to the end appointed for Him by God.

There was the sin of the world He had come to take away. Sin is everywhere and has affected all people. Sin is not superficial but defines who we essentially are. Sin leaps for joy to do its own will, to follow its unclean desires, to covet and to be jealous, among many things. Sin resents the truth and insults it. Christ gives us a new heart. This is the gift of Christmas. It makes us want to desire His will and do what pleases Him.

He 'takes away' sin. This is a happy loss for us. Gone is the penalty the law demands. Gone are our debts to God. God is pacified. Our sins no longer appear on our record and are no longer operative as something standing against us. Now there is nothing for us to pay today or when we appear before the Lord on the Day of Judgment. God now smiles at us, not frowns at us.

Joy is when we recognize something for the good that it is. There is nothing that can give us more joy than knowing the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of our soul.