The Forgotten Virtue of Christmas, part 2

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[0:00] There are some things I want to remind you of. You can be turning to Luke chapter 1.! Again, we'll have a lot of extra chairs set out.

It will be full. And so I do encourage you to get here a little bit early. And this is true every Sunday. But next Sunday for sure, just as you come, come prepared to help and to serve.
Namely, if you see someone needing a seat, helping them find a seat. If you're able to, to make sure and try to sit close together by people so we don't have empty seats.
We're going to need all of our chairs next Sunday morning. So one service, 10 o'clock. Get here early if you can. But we'll have a great, great day on Christmas Eve getting to have our entire church family together.
Also, we always have our candlelight Christmas Eve service. We'll do that as we always do. It happens to fall on a Sunday this year, but it will be the same as it always is on Christmas Eve.
[1:30] We'll do that at 8 o'clock on Christmas Eve as we do every single year. So the candlelight service next Sunday night at 8 o'clock will be a completely different service in the morning.

We'll sing together. The Oklahoma String Quartet will be here. They're going to start playing at 7.30. And so for our Christmas Eve candlelight service, we'll leave all our extra seating out for that service also.
Service is at 8, but they'll start playing at 7.30. You can come anytime you would like to. We do encourage you, though, for that service also to get here a little bit early. We anticipate Christmas Eve candlelight service being completely full.
You don't want to miss it. You'll want to be here for it. But I do encourage you to get here a little bit early for that service. It'll be right about 55 minutes or so. We'll end probably just right before 9 and be just a wonderful way to bookend our Lord's Day with service at 10.
And then our candlelight service at 8. So I hope that you'll be able to be back and be a part of that. And thank you to all of you who came last Sunday night for our outside Christmas around the tree.
[2:38] We had just an amazing turnout. We sat on a bunch of chairs and had about as many people standing as we had sitting in chairs. It was just a phenomenal time together.

I'm so thankful for all of you who were able to be there. We were thrilled with the participation, and the Lord was so gracious to give us really, really good weather. You know, for years we had this thing where every time we met outside we had bad weather.
And we're now on a pretty good streak of having good weather for outside events. So thank you for those who were able to come and to be a part of that. And then one last word. Inside your bulletin today, you've heard me talk for a couple of Sundays in our newsletter as well about inviting you to read through the Bible with me in 2024.
Now, again, some of you have other reading plans you do, and that's great. Others of you have systematic ways you like to study the Bible. That's wonderful. But if you're looking for a Bible reading plan, or maybe you've never read through the Bible, and you want to do so with a group, or maybe for you personal Bible reading, daily Bible reading is just something you struggle with, and you want to have a fresh start for a good discipline for the new year, I want to invite you, if that's true for you, to join with me.
This is the Bible reading plan I'm going to be using in 2024. And there's a few reasons why I want to use this one. If you look at the handout, it's in all of your bulletins today.
[4:08] Today, we've got the readings divided by months for you. There are two columns you'll read each day. One of the reasons I want to use this plan for myself, and then for those who want to do this with our church, is there's 25 readings a month, which means if you miss a day, you don't have to punish yourself.

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Sometimes it's hard when you read through the Bible, and you miss a day, miss two days, and you just feel like, oh my goodness, I'm overwhelmed. There's 25 readings a month. So you've got a little bit of cushion built in.
But my hope would be for those other days of the month that you're not in the reading plan. Those are days to go back and do some further study because one of the things that can happen when you read through the Bible in a year, you're reading at such a quick pace that sometimes there's things you'd like to go back and read, like to go back and study, but it's hard to do so because the next day's reading is always coming.
So with this reading plan, you've got about a week each month where you can go back and reread sections that maybe you struggled with, or if there's certain things you want to spend a little bit of extra time learning about, you've got some time built in to do that.
Or if you're keeping a notebook or a journal of things as you read, you can spend those other days to go back and pray through the things that you've learned, or maybe pick out a verse a week that you would want to commit to memory and memorize some scripture apart with your Bible reading in 2024.
[5:40] So this schedule allows you to do that. The other thing I like about it is that you're reading through whole books of the Bible pretty quickly. Rather than just reading a little bit from several books for a long time, you're reading through full books of the Bible pretty quickly, and it's alternating back and forth between Old Testament and New Testament.

And so I think that makes it very helpful to be able to process and understand what we're reading. So if you would like to join with us and read through the Bible in 2024, I invite you to do so.
Again, if you've got other ways that you prefer to read or study God's Word, then you do what is most helpful for you. But if you want to be a part of this, we'd love to have you join with us and read through the Bible with me in 2024.
And along the way throughout the year, I'll put out some things and some emails and some teaching videos that go along with what we're reading. For those who are participating in this to try to help us to make sure we're understanding and obeying and applying what we're learning.
So you can hold on to that. If that's something that would be a blessing to you, I would love to invite you to join with me in reading through the Bible in that format in the year 2024.
[7:00] All right. Luke chapter 1. We spent last week and then again this week looking at this short paragraph in Luke 1 verses 39 to 45 as we look at this brief but insightful interaction between Mary and Elizabeth.

Next Sunday on Christmas Eve, we're going to look at this next passage in Luke 1 where Mary offers up her song of praise and prayer of praise to the Lord.
Let me just remind you of what we've read last week and get this text back in front of you. If you would, please stand with me in honor of the reading of God's Word. And I'm going to read Luke 1 verses 39 to 45.
It says, In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah. And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.
And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
[8:23] For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

You can be seated. Three things I want you to see from this. The first we looked at last week. The second and third we'll look at this week. From last week, we looked first at this truth that our faith strengthens the faith of others.
Our faith strengthens the faith of others. As we looked at last Sunday, Mary has left and she has gone to make this three or four day journey to be with Elizabeth.
And while she is there, she is going to have the chance to share this most amazing news. Elizabeth herself, in the midst of a great work of the Lord, Mary pregnant with Jesus, Elizabeth pregnant with John the Baptist.
both have been favored by the Lord to be a part of such an incredible thing. Both of them, though, are being tested.

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[9:46] Tested by what other people would think about them, whether or not people would believe them. and tested because both of these ladies, while having an amazing privilege to be a mother and the amazing joy of delivering sons who would be so significant, life will not be easy.

And for both of these babies, as they are born and they grow, their lives will not be easy. John the Baptist is the forerunner of Messiah.
His purpose, his role, his calling is going to be to point the way to Jesus. to declare publicly that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
To declare in John 3 that he must decrease because Christ must increase. He will preach repentance.
He will be opposed. John the Baptist, he will be hated. He will be arrested. And he will be murdered.
[11:05] Jesus will live a sinless life and fulfilling his calling to pay his life as a ransom, he will go to a cross where he will freely, willingly give up his life as a payment for our sin.

In this brief exchange, we are able to have the curtain drawn back at least a bit to learn a little of this exchange and encounter between Mary and Elizabeth.
Both of them are faithful ladies. Both of them are having their faith tested, which is why it is such a beautiful encounter when they come together here in this passage and you see their faith and their trust.
They are both believing the word of God. They are both following through on what they have been called to do and their faith is strengthening the faith of each other.
I mentioned last week also that I think it's also worth noting the significance and the blessing in our lives of having close relationships with people in different generations.
[12:21] Mary is young and the text tells us that Elizabeth was old. And I think that's worth noting. That there is something really good about being a young person and having older people in your life that you can trust, that you look up to, that builds your faith, that can help you, that can pray for you, that can point the way for you, that can sustain you.

I think that's very important and too many people when they're young tend to look at older people and assume they have somehow lost all their intelligence or that the world just began a few years ago or that people that are over 40 or 50 or 60 are so out of touch they have nothing to offer.
And that's really tragic. It really is because one of the great blessings the Lord has given to His people is the joy of being a part of a body of Christ where according to the New Testament the older are to teach the younger.
And older women teach the younger women. And you've got elders in your church and elders that you look up to in the faith who can help you and strengthen you.
And those of you who are young and you can identify yourself if you feel young or not. If you're young one of the great blessings you have in this particular local church is you've got hundreds of people older than you.
[14:05] And they don't know everything. They're not perfect. But you've got a significant gathering of wisdom as a part of your church.

And I want to encourage you younger people to tap into that. To purposefully make friendships with people who are older than you.
To purposefully look around in your Sunday school class and say who's a bit further down the road of life than I am. Take them to dinner and buy them dinner and talk to them and build a friendship with them.
Sit by them at church on some Sunday mornings and just talk to them. Build a friendship with them. Let them know how they can be praying for you. May seem kind of strange at first.
A lot of friendships are. But it's worth it. Because one of the great blessings Mary has here is having someone in her life who though much older is someone that will build and strengthen her faith.
[15:16] And it's true the other way. Those of you who are older I'll let you pick if that's you or not. But those of you who are older by the way if you want to know if you're older just look around do you see a lot of people younger than you?

If so, there you go. Those of us who are older we need to go out of our way to have friends within the body of Christ who are younger than us.
This is very important. Because churches that don't do that develop these fractions between the church. And older and younger can tend to see each other as kind of the opposition instead of a great blessing.

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And those who are older in the church need to be reminded that life is not about looking backwards. I mean just think of the example in Scripture that there is a right way to look back and there is a wrong way to look back.
In Joshua when the Lord leads His people through the Jordan River He tells them to go back and to pick up stones to build these stones of remembrance so that when your children and grandchildren say what are these stones about you can remind them of the faithfulness of God.
[16:36] That's the right way to look back. Where you use what you've learned from the Lord and of the Lord to inspire faith in the younger generation. You need to be doing that.

The older people in our church you need to take the initiative to purposefully build relationships with younger people so that you can strengthen their faith and build their faith not by reminding them that gas was a nickel when you were in high school not by reminding them that hamburgers were free when you were in high school.
The day I got married gas was 69 cents. That's true. I'm 400 years old. But telling young people gas was 69 cents when you got married discourages them and frankly discourages me too.
That's the wrong way to look back. Don't take teenagers and remind them that life was somehow perfect when you were a kid and for them the whole thing's just a mess.
That's the wrong way to look back. The right way to look back is say I remember I remember what it's like when life is difficult.
[17:51] I remember what it was like when you moved out on your own. I remember what it was like with my first job. I remember what it was like when you had a sick child.

I remember what it was like when you felt overwhelmed. I remember what it was like when a child rebelled. and through all those things, here is how God was faithful.
And the older people in the church need to take the initiative to purposely build relationships with younger people so that that kind of faith-strengthening faith takes place.
One of the ways to kind of test yourself on this is just ask yourself, who do you talk to regularly and who do you pray for regularly that's in a different generation than you?
Who do you know that you're striving to be a faithful example to them? Older people, who do you know that you're pouring into their lives? Younger people, who do you know that you're looking up to and learning from?
[19:07] Who do you have in your life that you can call and say, we're struggling just a bit. I just need someone that's a little bit older, a little bit wiser to help lead and guide me through this season of life.

It's one of the real beautiful parts of the Christmas story to me. A young girl and an older woman, both with blessings, both with struggles, both obeying the Lord in the faith of one, strengthening the faith of the other.
Well, there's a second thing that we see, not only that faith strengthens the faith of others. Second, our joy expands the joy of others.
Our joy expands the joy of others. We see this specifically in verse 42. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit has filled Elizabeth without any other explanation. Elizabeth with joy is exclaiming and crying out with a loud cry of joy.
[20:32] What a great blessing this is. In fact, Elizabeth does something here that I think is just about as winsome of a characteristic of an attribute that any person can have and that is she rejoices in the blessing of somebody else.

This is such a beautiful way to live your life. That when somebody else receives a blessing, that you join with them in celebrating that.
Because too many times, the way that we look at things is we think, I want my friends to be blessed as long as they're not more blessed than me. I want you to get a salary raise in January as long as it's not more than me.
I want you to have a nice house as long as it's not nicer than mine. I want you to have beautiful children as long as they're not better looking than mine. I want you to have a great life as long as it's not better than mine.
And if somebody has some kind of a blessing they receive that you did not receive that same blessing, so often our first response is, God, how come it's them?

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[21:45] Why is this not happening to me? Why is my family not getting this blessing? And what Elizabeth does is she just is filled with joy because of the great news that Mary gives her.

Mary comes in. She's pregnant. Elizabeth is able to find out what's going on. But let me remind you, Elizabeth is pregnant too. This is part of the humility of this encounter and this conversation that is so striking to me.
Here is Elizabeth. She's been barren. She is now six months pregnant and has all the reason to want the spotlight to be on her.
Instead, here comes Mary. Elizabeth finds out Mary's pregnant and she just immediately rejoices with Mary. Mary, she doesn't demand the spotlight stay on her.
She just winsomely says, what an amazing blessing this is. And she sincerely rejoices in what's happening in Mary's life.
[22:58] This really is the forgotten virtue of Christmas, humility that Elizabeth is modeling for us. And can you imagine for young Mary?

She's just made this long journey to go to Elizabeth's house. She faces a very difficult road. She's away from her family back home.
And here's an older friend, an older relative who loves her, who helps strengthen her own faith, who rejoices with her and helps expand her own joy.
And notice specifically the word that Elizabeth uses here. Blessed are you among women. She says this is a great thing.
You're blessed as a person here. And just a quick word about what it means to be blessed as a child of God. This is not a statement about how you feel.
[24:09] It's a statement about who you are. It's very important to keep in mind. Because too many times we go through life and we think in terms of, if I feel happy today, then I'm blessed.

And if I feel like things are how I want them to be, then things are good. And if I don't feel happy today, then I'm not blessed. And if I don't feel joyful today, then I'm missing out.
What this teaches us is that as a child of God to be blessed is not about your circumstances. It's about your relationship to God. That's who you are.
So circumstances may not be how you wish they were. But being blessed as a child of God is a statement, not about how you feel today.
It's about who you are today. And in responding this way, Elizabeth is not only helping to strengthen the faith of Mary, she's also participating in the joy of this moment.
[25:22] I love to be around people who love to celebrate the good things in somebody else's life. I just find it to be one of the most beautiful, attractive traits imaginable.

For someone to say, God has blessed you, I just want to rejoice with you in that. Not a response of envy, not a response of jealousy, not a response of trying to one-up somebody, just saying, let's just stay right here and let me just rejoice in what God is doing in your life.
I love to be around friends that are like that. I love to be around pastors who are like that. Sometimes pastors can be very competitive and if another church is being blessed, pastors can be jealous or pastors can think, how come God, you're doing that in that church, why not here?
I love to be around fellow pastors who just can rejoice that anywhere God is working, it's an invitation to celebrate. I just find it to be such a beautiful trait in people's life and we see it exemplified here in Elizabeth.
And as you think about the Christmas story this year, let Christmas be a time where you are helping to build and strengthen the faith of others.
[26:54] Let Christmas be a time where you are looking for ways to expand the joy of others and to participate in the joy of others.

And then third, our humility encourages others to humble themselves before the Lord.
So first, our faith strengthens the faith of others. Second, our joy expands the joy of others. And third, our humility encourages others to humble themselves before the Lord.
Look at verse 43. Elizabeth says, And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Now there's some pretty rich theology on display here.
Elizabeth declares that Mary is the mother of Messiah. Jesus is a baby, a human being. She also affirms that the baby Mary is carrying here is her Lord.
[28:02] Jesus is divine. And people here, if they heard this conversation, people may think that Elizabeth has really lost her mind because she believes that Mary is pregnant with the God-man.

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And to make it even harder, at this point, Mary isn't even showing yet. There's no physical evidence for Elizabeth to see that Mary is truly pregnant.
All we know from the story is the testimony of Mary and that the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth. What we know is that Elizabeth's thoughts and interpretations are given to her by the Holy Spirit and Elizabeth believes.
she believes. And in verse 44, it says that, Behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
This is a big part of the Christmas story. Joy. This recalls back to chapter 1. Go back to verse 14. It says, And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.
[29:32] So the announcement of Elizabeth's pregnancy from heaven is all about joy. In verse 44, as Elizabeth responds to Jesus' presence inside of Mary's womb, it's all about joy.

If you go to verse 47 of chapter 1 in Mary's song of praise, it says, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
This is all about joy in the work God is doing. And then verse 45, Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.
By the way, just to kind of show you this in verse 42 and verse 45 is the English word blessed. It's two different words in the original language.
One word speaking of God's blessing on Mary. The other word speaking of how others would regard Mary. She is blessed from God and blessed in the sense of how other people would see her role.
[30:50] This is all about faith and joy and humility. This is about two ladies of very different generations trusting the word and the will of God.

This is about two people that are helping to strengthen the faith of each other while they celebrate the joy of what God is doing and as they humbly obey.
I mean, Elizabeth could have been jealous that Mary is there because Elizabeth's not only pregnant, she's pregnant with John the Baptist. She's pregnant with the forerunner of the Messiah. This is the man that Jesus later on will say that of men born to women no one has been better. The only way you could one up being pregnant with the forerunner of Messiah is if you are pregnant with Messiah yourself.
But what you see in this exchange is nothing about jealousy and nothing about envy and nothing about trying to one up somebody.
[32:16] This is all just about saying we trust what God is doing. Christmas is about joy, it's about humility, it's about relationships, and it's about trust.

there's not even a hint here of Elizabeth saying, well how come Mary gets to be pregnant with Messiah? I'm older than her, I've been faithful longer than she has, how come all I get is the forerunner?
But if we're honest we often think that way. God you've given me this blessing but why did you withhold this other one? God you've blessed our family this way but why did you bless that family that way?
Not even a hint of that. All you see from Elizabeth is joy and trust and humility and worship.
So I want to ask you this morning as you live your life as you follow the Lord Jesus would other people's faith grow because they've been around you more?
[33:42] Do other people's joy increase because they've been around you more? Do other people strive to live more humbly before the Lord because they've been around you more?

That should be our response because the truth of the matter is humility and worship not only go together they must go together.
For us to worship the Lord we must see Him for who He is. We must see ourselves for as needy as we are and that humbles us. Humility is essential for us to worship in spirit and truth.
And so we need people in our lives that help build our faith. That help us to be joyful and that model for us what it is to be humble.
faithful. And just understand that if you need people in your life like that and you do other people need you to be that in their life.
[35:05] And so just ask the Spirit of God today to help you to think through your life. faith. Are you striving to help people look to Jesus?

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Do you often talk about what the Lord has done? Are your words words of faith and words of hope? When people are around you do they think of the things of God?
When people are around you do they long for more of Christ? Or could it be that when people are around you they find themselves being more angry, more bitter, more gossip, more frustration? When people are around you do they find themselves feeling more joyful? Or do they find themselves feeling discouraged? And I think this is part of the intergenerational blessing of the body of Christ?
One of the reasons I love to spend time with our young people at our church is it just makes me hopeful. It gives me energy. It gives me life. I love being around young people who are excited, who have goals and dreams and visions and hopes and things they want to do.
[36:35] if I'm just around people like me, it just can get discouraging. But as I mentioned last week, if our young people, if the only people they talk to are themselves, I've got to tell you, young people, you're in trouble.

You need some people who know how to drive a stick shift to get through the world. And not because you have to drive a stick shift yourself, you just need somebody who knows something you don't know. but that's part of the beauty of the church.
That's part of why it's such a blessing. Because you look out and you see these young faces, and they need people to teach them and to pray for them and to encourage them and to model the Christian life for them.
Because for the adults in this room, when you take your last breath and your friends and family gather here for a funeral for you, the church isn't shutting down for any of us.
The ministry must keep going. And so we've got to make sure that we're teaching and loving and investing and helping the younger people and the next generation of leaders in this church.
[37:49] And they're not going to be inspired by old people who always talk about the good old days. And the young people aren't going to be taught and trained if they don't lift up their eyes off themselves and have humility to learn from some people older than them.

And by God's grace, he's given us a church family filled with children and filled with teenagers and filled with godly saints who have been through a lot.
And it's such a blessing. I had the chance last month I was preaching at our state convention and I said something in my message to them that something along what I just shared with you that I want to encourage the younger pastors to have old pastors that you can look up to and learn from and for the older pastors to care about the younger pastors.
pastors. And for about the next two weeks, I filled a phone call after phone call after phone call from younger pastors, which was a little encouraging and a bit hurtful.
Because what that told me is nobody heard me say that and thought, oh, well, there's an example of a young guy who ought to talk to an old guy. They're like, well, you're an old guy. I didn't know I was on the old guy list, but their response, let me know, whatever the list is, I'm on the old guy list.
[39:19] But the last couple of weeks, I've met with a number of young pastors. And they don't want to hear me talk about how good life was 20 years ago.

Or how much easier it was to pastor 15 years ago. What they're looking at me saying is, can you help me strengthen my faith?
And can you celebrate with me where God is at work? And can you help encourage me to do what God's called me to do? And as a pastor, if all I do is look back, I'm not helping anybody that's coming behind me.
The people coming behind me, the best thing I can do for them is keep my eyes ahead. God is looking at And I think we learn that from this story.
That Elizabeth is looking at Mary and responding with faith and with joy and with humility. And both of these ladies, blessed by God, are going to need every bit of the faith and encouragement they can have because their life while blessed will be anything but easy.
[40:48] And that's where the blessing of friendship comes in. Christ-honoring, God-exalting, Bible-saturated friendships that help you lift your eyes off of this world and to think more about Christ.

It's one of the great parts of this season. You guys know I love Christmas. I have for years. And there's a lot of things I love about it. But one of the things I love most about Christmas is it just gives people a reason to express their love and appreciation for other people.

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Now, you can do that year-round. That's true. And I hope that you do. But it's just, this season just makes it easier to say to somebody, I'm thankful for you.
I love you. I care about you. If you give someone a gift in May, that's fine. But they might think it's kind of weird if it's not your birthday. You give somebody a gift in December, it's okay.
It just kind of gives us a covering, a reason to express the joy and the love that we have for each other. And we can have that because God first loved us.
[42:13] Because God demonstrated his love by sending Christ his son. love by sending us And the love that we have for each other and the joy that we have for each other in this church is real.

And it's a blessing. And we have it because of what God has already given to us. If you don't know that love, if you don't know that joy, I can assure you there's nothing of cultural tradition at Christmastime that can give that to you.
The only way to feel and experience the fullness of what this season is all about is to first know Christ. My hope and my prayer for you, even this day would be this.
If you don't know Christ as your Savior, that today you would understand that Jesus is the one who came down from heaven, who lived a perfect life, never sinned, tempted and tried as you were, but yet without sin.
And the purpose of His coming was to go to a cross because the payment for our sin demands a perfect sacrifice.
[43:33] And that perfect sacrifice is none other than Jesus, the very one inside the womb of Mary in Luke 1. We'll go to the cross and on that cross we'll suffer in our place.

taking your sin upon Himself. Having the payment for your sin satisfied through His shed blood on the cross.
Dying in your place and being laid inside of a tomb, but on the third day, raised back to life. Giving up His life for you.
Sacrificing His life for you. Suffering for you. And when you know Him, you know what joy is.
And when you know Him, you understand what faith is. And when you know Him, you're humbled.
[44:43] And you no longer look to things or cares of this world to satisfy. Because you understand the only thing that truly satisfies is Christ Himself.

And my hope and prayer for you at Christmas is that you would truly experience the Christ of Christmas and live out the faith and the joy and the humility in such a way that it makes other people know and love Christ even more.
I pray that for you. I pray that for me. And I pray that would be true for our congregation. Would you pray with me? Lord, we thank You for Your Word.
We thank You, Lord, for what it teaches us and what it shows us, how it encourages us how to live.
We recognize that Mary and Elizabeth, while faithful examples, were not perfect.
They were sinners. Elizabeth needs a Redeemer. Mary needs a Redeemer. We need a Redeemer.
And we thank You that in Christ, the Redeemer promised long ago when Genesis 3 has been given.
[45:59] And I pray that today any who would not know You as Savior would follow and trust. just as we've seen the example of believers' baptism today and as we'll see more examples in our next service, we thank You today that You still call people from spiritual death to spiritual life.

And pray that You would do that even this day. Thank You for the people in this church that grow our faith and deepen our trust through the work of Your Spirit.
who increase our joy and who show us how to walk humbly with our God. May we in turn be that kind of example to those behind us.
It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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