



We bring our disappointments to God.

*"How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"*

Psalm 13:1

The Christian view is not 'just accept the world or my experience as it is.' It is to pray - to ask for God's help - to do what we can to address the issues. As Psalm 13 ends:

*"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me."*

Psalm 13:5-6.

### B. From Expectation to Expectancy

**Expectation** says: 'God, you need to do this exact thing for me. I expect you to - give us a child, or heal my chronic pain, or provide the kind of job I have been training for.' Sub-text: 'God, you owe me *this thing*. If I don't get it, I won't just be disappointed, I'll be devastated.'

**Expectancy** says: 'God, you know my heart, you know what I want - what I *think* I need - but I'm trusting you. I know you love me, and I'm resting in your love. I want what you want for me. I bring you my hopes and dreams - my desires - and I trust that you have good things for me, even if they are different that I thought.'

Expectancy isn't to say, 'I have no desires.' But 'I trust God *with* my desires, and come with 'expectancy,' an openness to what God has for me. I'll keep serving and loving you, even when I can't see what you're doing.'

### C. Stubborn Faithfulness

This theme of 'faithfulness' is so key to this story. Every character - starting with Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Mary and Joseph, to Simeon and Anna - every character is described as those faithful to God, even - perhaps especially - when things are not going as planned.

Elizabeth's name means: 'God is oath,' or 'God is the absolutely faithful one.'

Zechariah's name means: 'God has remembered.'

This couple becomes a great example of stubborn faithfulness to the God who is 'absolutely faithful,' who 'remembers,' no matter what we are going through. Where do you, this Advent season, need to stay faithful to God's ways even still? Even with your disappointments?

### D. "Blessing" is Always for Blessing Others

John will not only be a joy and delight to his parents, but

*"...many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord."*

Luke 1:14b-15a

He will serve a key role in God's saving history .

We often think of 'blessing' on only a very personal, individualistic level. God's 'blessings' are seen as, 'good for me;' but blessing is always bigger than you. God *does* give us good things; but they're never just for us. What God has given us is meant to flow out to others.

### II. Dancing for Joy

*"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped [skirtao] in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."*

Luke 1:41

The word for 'leaped' Luke uses here - *skirtao* (σκιρτάω) [skeer-TAH-oh] - it's very rare in the Bible. It is only used three times in the New Testament, and only in Luke's Gospel. Two of those times are right here; but this word is resonant with the prophetic words about John and Jesus from Malachi.

*"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic [skirtao, LXX]<sup>1</sup> like well-fed calves."*

Malachi 4:2

## NOTES

If we aren't responding with the kind of joy that sets a calf skipping, the leaping for joy like John in utero, that praising God in a 'loud voice' as we read of Elizabeth here – if we aren't responding to the reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – what He has done, we might wonder if we haven't yet begun to grasp the depths of it all?

### III. Joy Under Pressure

The only other place this word, *skirtao*, is used in all of the New Testament is a few chapters later in Luke's Gospel – in Jesus' own words of 'Blessing' or 'Beatitudes.' Here Jesus is speaking of God's blessing toward those who have experienced poverty and hunger, those who are grieved, excluded, insulted and rejected. Jesus says:

*“Rejoice in that day [the day when you’re mistreated]  
and leap [skirtao] for joy, because great is your  
reward in heaven.”*

Luke 6:23

The saving work of the Saviour Jesus – that causes baby John to ‘leap for joy’ inside of Elizabeth’s womb – that is the same reason that all of us are called to ‘rejoice’ and ‘leap for joy,’ even – perhaps especially – in light of what we might suffer for following Jesus, in light of the disappointments.

There is great **reason** to rejoice, to lift your voice in praise and give yourself – like John will – to make Jesus known. “**Great is your reward in heaven,**” (Luke 6:23) says Jesus.

Not only does Elizabeth have **reason** to praise, but she has the **resource** of God's very presence, the Holy Spirit, filling her full and enabling her joy.

We do need to ‘think about’ what God has done and respond to God with all the good **reasons** to - but that’s not all. God the Holy Spirit is our great **resource** who indwells, enables and empowers us in a deeply personal way.

Joy is partly something that can be cultivated. We 'rejoice' as we learn to read our situation, including our disappointments, in light of God's good work – His big picture.

Joy is also, partly, just a gift. Joy is a ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ as Paul talks about in Galatians. The Fruit of the Spirit is what the Spirit generates.

How could you be open to leaning into the joy that Jesus brings, even in light of the disappointments?

How can you open yourself to the Spirit to share His blessings with the world?

## End Notes

1. The abbreviation LXX refers to the Septuagint, which is the earliest Greek Translation of the Hebrew Bible. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint#:~:text=The%20Roman%20numeral%20LXX%20\(seventy,or%20G](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint#:~:text=The%20Roman%20numeral%20LXX%20(seventy,or%20G)

## NOTES

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### Open Up

Can you think of the last time you were exceptionally excited or joyful – when you wanted to celebrate ‘wildly’ or without inhibition? What caused it? What was it like?

Or – if you can’t remember a time – what *would* make you want to celebrate like that?

### Dig In

1. **Read Luke 1:6-7.** What strikes you about this description? Try and place yourself in the story – how would you feel if you were in their shoes? Why?
2. **Read Luke 1:8-25.** In the message we talked about four aspects of responding to disappointment. Talk about why you think each is important.
  - a. Legitimate lament
  - b. From expectation to expectancy
  - c. Stubborn faithfulness
  - d. Blessed to be a blessing to othersOf these, which is the one you are needing God’s help to deepen?
3. **Read Luke 1:39-45.** What parts stand out to you in this text? What further questions does it raise for you?
4. We heard in the message: ‘Not only does Elizabeth have **reason** to praise, but she has the **resource** of God’s very presence, filling her full.’ One element of the ‘Fruit of the Spirit,’ the ‘result of the Holy Spirit indwelling our lives,’ is joy. How might you have experienced joy, even in times of pressure, because of God’s presence in you? Where in your life do you want more of that sense of God’s peaceful presence and joy?

### Prayer

Give thanks to God for the way He works in miraculous ways – to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. Take time to pray for each other, especially in light of our last question: where in your life do you want more of a sense of God’s peaceful presence and joy in your life? Ask for God’s Spirit to ‘enliven’ your heart to rejoice like Elizabeth in this scene.