

Series: The Invitation	Reference: <i>Luke 1:39-45</i>	Title: Elizabeth's Joy	Date: 12.15.2019
Website Writeup: Elizabeths story is one of a person who may feel past their prime, but in whom God works & does great things anyway! Can God use you at any stage of life for great things in His kingdom!?!?			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Memory Verse for this Series

Romans 6:23

*For the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Play: Fred, the Dunkin Donuts Maker - [Gotta Make the Donuts video...](#)

If you're below thirty you only understand that commercial cognitively, not experientially, because you still think you can conquer the world! Ask any kid what they want to be when they grow up, and it's never something small - it's always something great. I'm here today to crush your little dreams, but I will replace them with a better one.

Those of us past our twenties already feel we've settled & succumbed to the monotony of life. The drudgery. It's time to make the donuts. If you're old enough to remember these commercials with Fred the Baker, you know why that commercial resonates, because you've lived it. Life just seems to roll over us, and we eventually get stuck in the day in day out monotony of life's necessities. Our upward trajectory interrupted by life either by way of a crashed stock market, a divorce, a death, or some other traumatic event. Or, just the responsibilities, work, kids, maintenance & housework. These build & seem to push away any thought of creativity, or greatness. Gotta make the donuts...

When we were young we thought we'd accomplish great things. We'd go down in history books. We'd be referenced in coming generations, citing our thoughts, words & accomplishments which have changed the world! We'd make our first million by thirty, and we'd have written that book already. But the book never came & now we live in debt.

Into my early 20's I thought I'd be a great artist. I'd produce paintings which would hang alongside the greats. Picasso - Van Gogh - Da Vinci - Guynes! My work would be referenced, categorized & sold for millions to museums & wealthy people through Christies Auction house. My paintings would lend great philosophical insight sparking changes in world history.

Then reality set in....

I could draw & paint maybe better than the next guy, but I had my limits. I wasn't a great artist. My paintings grace my own walls, not museums. And all the promises of 'work hard & make your dreams come true' never produced a life worth talking about. Factors to fame & greatness were largely out of my hands, let alone my control. Add to that the necessity of making a living! Money must be made to survive. When I die, very few will talk about me after I'm gone. I'll enter the annals of silence along with multitudes who've gone before me. Very few in this world attain greatness, or fame, and living in on the Main Line is deceptive, driving by mansions in Gladwyne & parking next to a Bentley at the Acme, a car worth more than our house & we ask, "What happened?"

We may feel past our prime. I have Spanish speakers in my house now, but the peak of language learning is at 8 years old, 44 years ago for me! Brain processing power peaks at 18. The ability to remember unfamiliar names peaks at about 22, so all you new people, this is why I ask your name every week even though you've told me 3 times! It's science, not my fault! Women are most attractive to men at about 23, and men's attractiveness to women seems to get better with age. That sounds terrible for the ladies, and great for the guys, but maybe guys need that edge for their wives to put up with them all those years! Interestingly, life satisfaction first peaks at 23 & again at 69. My theory is that, for the former, you have all the money & no responsibilities. For the latter, it's because we have even more money, no responsibility - add to that we've lost our sex drive & no longer have to worry about that!

Strength peaks at age 25, which is why both my sons can beat me at an arm wrestle. The peak age to settle down is 26, but we push that boundary! The average elite marathoner is 28. Bone mass peaks at about 30. Chess players peak at about 31. You're best at learning new faces when you're about 32. On average, Nobel Prize winners make their big discovery at 40.

Good news for us older folks, your understanding of other people's emotions peaks in your 40s & 50s. Math skills peak at 50. Vocabulary peaks in your early 70s. Men & women feel best about their bodies after 70, again I think that has a lot to do with my former theory. People really do get wiser as they get older & psychological well-being peaks at about 82.

People are most likely to make big decisions when their age ends in a nine. Maybe because we're getting more scared about passing our prime since it's daunting to approach a round-numbered birthday. Researchers looking at people who were 29, 39, 49, or 59 found that they were more likely to make a big life change - good or bad. These people were overrepresented in groups of people seeking to have an affair, commit suicide, and people running a marathon for the first time...

All sounds sort of depressive...are we past our prime?

Let me ask... **Can Jesus still do great works in & through you?** Even past your prime?

You may not write that book but **He'll use you to bring forth Christ to the world in a unique way.** Your life matters in the story of God. It may seem that nothing wonderful's happening now, or has happened, but very possibly it has, even if you've not noticed, and will as you walk forward with Jesus. He'll work through your very real physical everyday circumstances & mundane day to day events. And today we'll look at a simple story of someone in which this happened.

Turn with me to p697 in your church Bibles as we'll be looking at Luke chapter 1. I'd like you today to think on that question: **Can Jesus still do great works in & through you?**

We enter the Christmas story today after Mary & Joseph have been confronted with the miracle of her pregnancy by the Holy Spirit. As we saw last week, they went through a great deal when they said 'Yes' to the Holy Spirit & all that meant for them.

During this same time, the Angel also visited Zechariah while he served in the Temple & informed him that his wife, Elizabeth, would also be having a child. Zechariah was a little incredulous given they were both old. Luke 1:7 says, *Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. It also says, they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments & statutes of the Lord (vv 6&7).*

They were people true to the word, living their lives as a testimony & in pursuit of purity & holiness before God. People who've been living day in day out walking with the Lord as hard as we know that is. Life was probably very mundane. They were past their prime. No one would've expected Elizabeth to conceive. You could hear Zechariah saying, "It's time to make the donuts," as he entered the Temple to perform the duties of the priest that day. Elizabeths probably at home cooking up something for dinner as she's done many times before. Life as usual, until Zechariah is struck mute by this angel with the message that his wife's going to have a baby!

Then Luke 1:39-45 tells us what happens next, read with me...*"At that time Mary got ready & hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home & greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women & blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"*

If you jump back up to the second half of verse 15, speaking of the baby in Elizabeths womb, it says, *he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.* Revealing to us this already intimate connection John had with Jesus even from within the womb!

John's a special guy. It's prophesied in Malachi, the prophet Elijah would appear to usher in the Messiah. And Luke 1:17 refers to this prophecy in talking about John, *17 and*

he [John] will go before him [Jesus] in the spirit & power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." Luke's quoting the prophecy found in Malachi 4:5-6 lending credence to this miraculous event & foreshadowing exactly who Jesus & John were to be.

We celebrate femininity & motherhood this week in people like Elizabeth as we celebrated masculinity & fatherhood last week in Joseph. Elizabeth says YES to the Holy Spirit. A faithful woman walking with the Lord who used her in a great & powerful way. Women are beautiful powerful beings created by God for His glory, reflecting that side of his nature as Joseph reflected the opposite. She's life-giving. Like Mary, only she is equipped, then chosen to carry out her part in the story of God in this way!

In the breakdown of John Paul II's Theology of the Body, Christopher West says this about Mary, *'Mary fully illuminates the theology of a woman's body. In her, woman's body has literally become the dwelling place of the Most High God - heaven on earth! Every woman shares in the some way in this incomparable dignity & calling.'* Women are the wonderful contrast to men who round out our image of God. Think about the silence of Joseph & compare that with the raw uninhibited joy Elizabeth exudes here with Mary.

She says among other things here, *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"*

It's that side of femininity which is absolutely reflective of God. We speak in extremes, and no one would say that all men are silent & unemotional, I myself am a big loud passionate cry-baby. In many situations my wife is definitely more levelheaded than me. However there is an innate difference in the two. Divinely created & ordained, they both reflect God in some way who is Spirit, both male & female in nature. Elizabeth connects with joy naturally & easily, which is commendable, and from which, we all can learn.

On Christmas Eve we'll see our kids play out the Christmas story. Moms, be encouraged - you birthed those little cherubs into this world. You went through all the pain & struggle of pregnancy to push that out of you. God's redeeming your family one member at a time. He's doing a work in your kids through you. As you walk with the Lord & say yes to the Holy Spirits leading, your kids will also be a herald of Christ in this world. He'll use you & them. We only need to be faithful in our pursuit of Christ, and allow our faith to overflow into our children through what may seem as the every day mundane commitment to the *'commandments & statutes of the Lord'* as Elizabeth did. Your children's lives can be even better than yours. They can be even more faithful than you. In a sense, you can still do great things through them!

Remember the prophecy of Malachi 4:6 concerning the coming Messiah when he says, *He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents...* Does that mean the each one of our children will walk with Jesus, not

necessarily. But I regard it as an overall promise that God shows favor to his children & works in, through, and to build our families in light of our devotion to Christ.

Turn with me to P737 In your church Bible to John 14:12-13. Let's remember Jesus words to us here... ¹² *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.* ¹³ *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

Jesus is redeeming us, and His work extends to our families for the sake of God's glory through Christ in us.

Elizabeth's been faithfully walking blamelessly with the Lord. That doesn't mean she's perfect or sinless, it simply means she took her faith seriously concerning all areas of life. She wasn't out for her own glorification, but for the Lords. Maybe she knew that in the very mundane ins & outs of life, God will move & use her, all she had to do is be faithful & receive the circumstances with joy. Like Joseph last week, Elizabeth is another model to follow. One who faithfully lives out their faith, and says YES to the Holy Spirit with a joyful spirit.

Turn with me now to P661 in your church Bible to Matthew 6:33. We get caught up in the day to day. Life's partly about the pursuit of need, and our focus often becomes misdirected in light of that. In Matthew 6:33, referencing all the things we chase after, Jesus redirects in saying, ³³ *But seek first his kingdom & his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Meaning our focus should be on Jesus trusting that all our needs will be taken care of. Not that we don't go to work or hold responsibility, but that we see everything through the lease of higher purpose & calling as ambassadors of Jesus. And we complicate it further than simply being misdirected, because beyond simple necessities, we make life all about us. People in pursuit of their own greatness. We want OUR dreams realized, OUR name to be great, to make OUR mark on history, to get OUR nest egg, and to make a name for OURselves.

Turn with me now to P719 in your church Bibles to John 21:15-19. When faced with Jesus we find, He expects something quite different. A different focus on his righteousness & kingdom. Jesus outlines what it means to focus on these things in John 21:15-19, where after His resurrection He meets Peter on the beach & it says...¹⁵ *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

¹⁶ *Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."*

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

When Jesus first asks, do you love me more than these, was he licking his fingers while holding fishbones in his other hand? Such as to say, do you love me more than food, more than basic need? Or, was he waiving his hand at the others sitting around, as if to say, do you love me more than your friends? I'm not sure. But either way it's an entreaty to make Jesus first in all things. That His life is now your life. His work is now your work. As he said, *whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

Am I passed my prime? Has my life been a waste since I didn't accomplish my youthful dreams? Not at all. Have I been led by Jesus into places I didn't want to go? Yes, I have, although that meant a great deal more for Peter than for me. Will I continue to be used for God's glory? Definitely so, since it's not about my dreams, rather it's about God's glory in the world. Does Jesus have other, even greater, but maybe less noticeable plans for me? Yes, most definitely. Has it all been worth it? Yes, and probably more than I know. How about you?

Do you believe He'll use you to bring forth Christ to the world in a unique way? Can God still do something great in & through you even if you feel past your prime? Of course he can...

So, if you're below thirty, allow Jesus to kill your dreams & adopt His. If you're over thirty & feel like Fred the Baker, keep making the donuts for Christ's kingdom & righteousness! Do the everyday work of caring for others, loving your neighbors, following Jesus, seeking first His righteousness. I assure you, He'll use you to introduce Jesus to others! Say yes to the Holy Spirit. Find the same joy Elizabeth did when the Spirit leaps inside of you as you see Christ at work in someone else!