Luke 1:46-56: Recapturing Contentment

# Opening:

* Christmas brings out the best and worst in people. Tonight, let’s be optimistic. Tell a story about when you saw Christmas bring out the best in someone.
* Is there a time when Christmas brought out the best in you?

## Reviewing the Teaching

* Read Luke 1:46-50 aloud as a group.
* This is the basic outline of Pastor Dave’s sermon.
  + Finding joy in Jesus by giving thanks to Jesus
    - Mary’s Song (Luke 1:46-56)
    - Poisoned Paradise (Genesis 2-3)
    - Discovering Contentment (Philippians 4:4-13)
* Mary’s Song (Luke 1:46-56)
  + Put yourself into Mary’s situation. She truly had things to be afraid of. How do you think the people around her responded to her pregnancy? What was Joseph’s initial reaction (Matthew 1:19)? On the other hand, she had God’s favor and blessing. If you say it fast it does not sound like much.
  + We are not sure why Mary wrote this poem, but we can see how she approached a conflicted situation. Mary’s circumstances are unique and extreme. She will be the mother of God, the Saviour. This is reason for extreme joy! She has two choices in her reaction, look to God or look to her circumstances. How did Mary choose to respond? What difference does it make?
  + In his sermon, Pastor Dave said, “Focusing on God doesn’t mean our challenges go away or our problems suddenly disappear, but it does mean our priorities get re-aligned and we enter a spirit of thankfulness.” Read verses 49 and 50 again.
  + How do our priorities get re-aligned? Is this really a thing?
  + Read Psalm 9:1 and 75:1. Do these verses follow a pattern of praising God and then stating the reasons to be thankful?
  + God does great things. The last part of this passage, verses 51 to 55, emphasizes this. God lifts the humble and scatters the proud. What does God give beyond our physical needs? Where does a proud person look for contentment? What about the humble?
* Poisoned Paradise (Genesis 2-3)
  + Read Genesis 1:28-30 and 2:16, 17.
  + What does God give to Adam and Eve? Think about the full extent of this gift. What did God leave out?
  + Eve sinned, and then Adam, because they wanted something more. How did the first sin express discontentment? What about the second to the billionth and beyond?
  + A bit later, just before crossing into Israel for the first time, God gave a warning. Read Deuteronomy 8:10-14. Ouch! How can we avoid the sin of pride?
  + Pastor Dave had an interesting phrase, “Thanksgiving is kryptonite to discontent.” Has he watched too many Marvel movies? What do you think of this phrase?
* Discovering Contentment (Philippians 4:4-13)
  + Read through the passage. Is Paul’s contentment based at all on his circumstances? The last phrase, “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength,” is a great summary. Think about what you know about Paul’s life. What are some of the high and low points you can think of?
  + What can we learn from Paul? Was his attitude controlled by the strength of his will? Could he change his circumstances to change his life? This is important. We cannot will ourselves to be content. Contentment comes from our time with God starting with thankfulness.

## Engaging the Message and Living it Out

* There were some great quotes in the sermon on Sunday. Some of them are below. One was added in for a twist. A “Pat Answer” is an answer that is probably correct but does not really satisfy the questioner. Read each quote and answer these questions:
  + Is this a Pat Answer? Why or why not?
  + How did you feel about the quote?
  + Is the quote thankful in some way?
  + How does the quote respond to circumstances?
  + To get closer to the truth, what would you change, the quote or yourself?
* “Someone”: “I want two things to be happy; more, and more than you.”
* Gary Thomas: “Contentment is about resting, about removing ourselves from the vain strivings of the world and thus finding peace and quiet in God’s will.”
* C. S. Lewis wrote, “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like and ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”
* Pastor Dave: “What if you only have (get) today, what you gave thanks for yesterday?”
* Stephen Altrogge writes “We won’t be fully satisfied when we get what we want. Because God loves us and wants us to find our satisfaction in him, he won’t allow us to be satisfied. To believe that we’ll finally be happy when we get what we want is a lie.”
* When is discontentment okay? Are there things where God is not content? How does contentment allow you to respond to “holy discontent”?

# PRAYER

* Consider praying as a large group tonight. How can you pray that God would lead your group to contentment?
* Express the message of Christmas in your prayers. Over Christmas we can, “Find joy in Jesus by giving thanks to Jesus.”