

## “How to Be a Gift to Others”

Text: Luke 1:39-45

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Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church ([www.pbpc.org](http://www.pbpc.org))

Oakland, California

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Read Luke 1:39-45 [Jason O’Neill]

### PRAY!

Last week we saw that Mary had just been chosen by God through His angel, Gabriel, to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah. This is the miracle: Mary is a virgin and her baby would be conceived by God, the Holy Spirit. This would be the Greatest Gift the world has ever seen—God becoming a human being.

The Angel Gabriel, in explaining this miracle to Mary, mentions that her relative Elizabeth is pregnant in her old age; that nothing is impossible with God.

- Mary agrees to be the mother of Jesus.
- Mary then rushes off to visit her relative probably wondering if the events of the last few days had been real.

Notice Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary as she arrives. Filled with the Holy Spirit she says,

- *“God has blessed you above all women.*
- *“Your child will be blessed.”*
- *“Why am I so honored that the mother of my Lord should visit me?”*
- *“You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what He said.”*

How did Elizabeth know about Mary, other than the Holy Spirit revealing it to her? Elizabeth’s greeting and blessing must have encouraged Mary and strengthened her faith. This confirmed to Mary that God would be faithful to all the events of the previous few days.

This morning we continue our series on “Great Gifts for Christmas”. John 3:16 is our theme verse, *“For God so loved the world that He gave...”* God is a “Giver”, and He calls us to be givers as well, especially at Christmas when we celebrate the greatest gift of all, Jesus. These past two weeks we looked at:

- The Gift of Silence.
- And the Gift of Possibilities.
- This morning we’ll examine the Gift of Blessing—“How to be a Gift to Others”.

The key word in this passage is “blessed”. It’s used three times, and means to speak well of, to be an object of favor, to be set apart for something special.

“Blessing” has become a lost art in our nation. Certain cultures still practice this within their family systems, some churches are built on this, but for many it’s a

missing practice. Why is blessing so important? And if it is important, how do you give this gift of blessing to another?

Brian & his father

- He didn't believe that anyone could love him.
- "Dad, please wake up. Please say that you love me."

Why is the blessing so important? We all need love and acceptance. The blessing provides for this. From earliest times, God's people have been called to be a blessing. Speaking to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, God said, *"I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing... In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed."*

- Abraham was blessed by God to be a blessing to the world.
- This blessing was to be passed directly through one family's offspring; generation after generation until the birth of the Messiah, Jesus.
- Now, through Jesus, every family and each family member can experience a blessing through God's Son. Even you!

I want us to consider this morning three ways to give the Gift of Blessing:

## HOW TO BE A BLESSING

### 1. MEANINGFUL TOUCH

- A. When Isaac blessed Jacob, an embrace and a kiss were involved. Genesis 27:26, *"Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son!'"* "Come close" means to give him a hug. Our culture sets certain taboos on a man embracing his son. Yet, people need meaningful touch. Isaac was a model that parents, husbands and wives, and even friends at church need to follow in giving the blessing. It's really "okay" to give someone else a hug, a pat on the back, or a friendly handshake.
- B. Jesus was a model of someone who communicated the blessing of meaningful touch to others. Jesus was a master of communicating love and personal acceptance.
  - Jesus healed the leper (an untouchable) in Mark 1 by reaching out and touching him before healing him. Why? Because Jesus saw his greatest need was for love and acceptance.
  - Meaningful touch was a part of Jesus' blessing children. Mark 10:16, "[Jesus] took them up in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them."
- C. Illustrations:
  - Lord's Lighthouse
  - Larry

D. In a recent study at UCLA, it was found that just to maintain emotional and physical health, men and women need eight to ten meaningful touches each day!

1. Hand shake, hug or kiss
2. Who do you know that needs a meaningful touch?

## 2. SPOKEN WORDS

A. Do you remember the lines, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”? All too quickly we learn that words really *do* hurt. Words have incredible power to build us up, or tear us down emotionally.

B. The Bible recognizes the power and importance of spoken words.

- Genesis 1, God spoke and the world came into being.
- God communicated His love and plan of salvation to humanity through His Word that became flesh and lived among us (Jesus).
- God has always been a God who communicates His blessing through spoken words.

C. Proverb 18:21, *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*

This should encourage us to speak words of love and encouragement to our family or friends.

- Family reunion – Beginning, everyone is talking up a storm about this recipe, that football team, this book they’ve read or that movie to attend, catching up. But on the last afternoon of the reunion something happens. With only one hour left, meaningful words will begin to be spoken.
- A brother will say in private to his sister, “I know things will work out in your marriage. I’ll be praying for you.” An aunt will say to her niece, “You’ve always made me proud. I know school is hard, but I know you can do it. I believe in you.” Or a daughter will say to a parent, “Look around you, Mom. We didn’t turn out half bad, did we? We have you and Dad to thank.”

D. What kind of spoken words should we say? Words that express high value (honor) and acceptance.

1. “I love you.” “You’re God’s special Christmas gift to us.”

E. Who do you know that needs to hear spoken words of love and encouragement during this Christmas season?

## 3. ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE FOR A SPECIAL FUTURE

A. Let me ask you, “What kind of words of hope and encouragement do we speak into the lives of our family, friends and church family? Let me give you an example with children. Children begin to take steps down a positive pathway when they hear words like these: “God has given you such a sensitive heart. I wouldn’t be surprised if you end up helping a great many people when you grow older,” or “You are such a good helper. When you grow up and marry someday, you’re going to be such a help to your wife (or husband) and family.”

- B. We need to recognize the best in those we bless. Picturing a special future for a child, spouse or friend can help bring out the best in their lives. The prophet Jeremiah is an example of this concerning our relationship with God: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* Jeremiah 29:11. Time and time again God gives us a picture of our special future with Him.
- C. Illustrations:
- Parents
  - Hollywood Pres. Pastor
- D. Who do you know that needs your blessing of hope and encouragement for their life?

These three elements are the building blocks of “Blessing.” The glue that keeps them together is prayer; asking God to bless those we pray for on a regular basis.

Imagine what would happen if an entire church decided to bless those in their fellowship.

- A church where relational needs were actively being met by a welcoming handshake or hug (meaningful touch).
- Where appreciation for a fine sermon, working in the children/youth classes or simply listening to a hurting brother or sister was verbally acknowledged (spoken word).
- Groups of believers acknowledging every member’s true worth (attaching high value), and speaking words of hope and encouragement to reach their God-given potential (a special future).

Elizabeth blessed Mary. Mary was now encouraged and ready for God’s special future for her as the mother of God the Son. Are you willing to be a blessing to others?

## **PRAYER**