

Communion around Uncommon Grace

Luke 1:39-45

Mary and Elizabeth were 'cousins; (lit. 'relatives'), but their fellowship with one another can only be explained in terms of the Spirit of God and common experience of uncommon grace in both their lives. For example, Elizabeth had a child in her "old age." Mary had a child in her virgin youth. Both babies in the womb, John in Elizabeth and Jesus in Mary, can only be explained by gracious, divine intervention.

I. My deepest communion and bond with people occur at the point of common experiences.

This point is so axiomatic it needs little proof. In examining your own life, you will find your closest friends are those who have walked with you through a common experience. This seems universal. C.S. Lewis once said, *"Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival."* Life is enriched by this kind of fellowship.

II. Communion with others around God's *uncommon* grace transforms me like no other relationship.

What was the common experience of Mary and Elizabeth? Was it carrying sons in their wombs? Yes. But what forms an even deeper connection was the *uncommon grace* that both received from God. Elizabeth was old and unable to bear a son. Mary was in her virginal youth. Both experienced favor. When we see the riches of His grace, take hold of those riches--knowing that they are undeserved--yet believing that God is *only gracious to the undeserving*, then our communion around grace is born.

(A). The Father is always at home in the place of grace and moves in power.

"And Mary greeted Elizabeth greeted Mary...and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 41). Remember Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I"? The phrase 'in my name' speaks of character, personhood, and will. What is the character of Christ? Grace. Uncommon grace. Yes, Jesus was tough on the religious, but He transformed the sinner.

(B). The focus becomes on the treasure within and not the trouble outside.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb? (v. 42). We have already seen that Mary was a 'bitter sinner' who experienced the favor of God. God blessed Mary, not did Mary bless God. Fellowship is around the power, promises and performance of Christ within.

(C). The feeling within me is that *others* are more important than *me*.

"How has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?" (v. 43). I receive Grace and Christ in me becomes my "hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). My relationship with others is then based on the uncommon grace I've received, not because I have excelled in performance!

(D). The faith of everyone is that the Lord can and will fulfill His good intentions.

"Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what the Lord spoke" (v. 45). Uncommon grace in the lives of sinners is present because there is faith in the goodness of God!

III. Let each of us take the time and expend the energy to build friendships around uncommon grace.

"At this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country ... and greeted Elizabeth" (vs. 39-40). *"There are many who think upon His name, and yet forget to speak often one to another."* J.C. Ryle This ought not be the case. *"As iron sharpens iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend...As in water a face answers to a face, so does the heart of a friend to a friend"* (Proverbs 27:17, 19).

(A). Ask yourself the question, "To whom do I share an experience of uncommon grace?"

It could be that one of the reasons it is difficult to fellowship around uncommon grace is due to an inability to articulate how you have received the Lord's blessings in your brokenness.

(B). Ask yourself the question, "How often do I enjoy sharing my experiences of uncommon grace?"

Emmanuel exists solely for the purpose of facilitating relationships that edify and encourage.