

Gospel Fullness

Luke 1:26-38

Each one of us is on a path to human flourishing or fullness – it’s something, to quote Blaise Pascal, even those ‘*who hang themselves*’ are striving after, desperately trying to achieve. In the text we looked at last week, we noted that this is Mary’s ‘experience’ of fullness – true fullness. Yet the backward nature of how she comes into a state of fullness is the antithesis of how we often endeavor unto fullness. The problem is that many of us, to use Martin Luther’s parlance, strive for fullness through a theology of glory, rather than a theology of the cross. Yet Biblical fullness or human flourishing is achieved through a theology of the cross, not a theology of glory and this text is a window into this movement.

First, we observed that this narrative section oozes humility. The most incredible news ever proclaimed comes to a backwater region, to a no-name town, to a girl who is barely a teenager. But in this way Mary (in her *humble estate*) is a model for recipients of salvation like you and I. The first movement in Biblical fullness is embracing our neediness. Yet importantly, embracing our neediness isn’t the same as embracing hopelessness.

The second movement of Biblical fullness identifies the true king worthy of our allegiance. We noted that there are several kings as well as numerous other narratives that are subtly injecting a theology of fullness into our lives. But whereas these other theologies of fullness tell us to behave or conform before belonging, Jesus is a king who gave himself so that we could belong. Darrell Bock writes, “But the fact that [Jesus’] birth was like any other common birth says a lot about the great lengths God goes in order to identify with the most humble people of the world. God may be the God of the universe, but he is no elitist.”

The final movement of Biblical fullness is to relate to Christ as king more and more in our own respective narratives. Relating to Christ as king is a costly endeavor, just as it was a costly endeavor for Mary when she humbly proclaimed, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). The cost of discipleship – a cost all disciples of Christ are called to bear – is costly both in the way we relate to the world, the way we relate to our possessions, the way we relate in our relationships, etc. But this is an essential part of the backward nature of Biblical fullness.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn from this sermon? Specifically
 - a. What insights did you learn?
 - b. What questions do you have? Are there any areas you don’t understand?
 - c. What areas of your life (be specific) do you sense God wants to change as a result of this passage of Scripture?
2. What other narratives of ‘fullness’ do you have a propensity to consciously or unconsciously buy into?
3. What does the ‘cost of discipleship’ look like for you?