

## **“Stable Time”**

**Luke 1:39-45**

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+1:39-45](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+1:39-45)

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### **Instead of Christ ‘mas’ many people experience Christ ‘mess’ at this time of year.**

The roads are messy. Family gatherings are messy. The shopping lines are long and messy. The checkbook is way too messy. The cooking of food leaves the kitchen messy. And, for those persons who are alone, in grief, or struggling with difficult family memories hearing Bing Crosby croon “I’ll be home for Christmas” is way too much! For many people Christ’mess’ is a season to just survive. We hope that someday Christ’mess’ will become Christmas, but for many people the darkness of the season and all that is going on in the world just leaves them depressed and dispirited.

- Someday there will be peace on earth. When?
- Someday there will be good will toward all people. When?
- Can peace come while people hate each other, deceive one another, envy one another, and rob one another?

The world each year is reminded of Christmas peace with an outburst of generosity toward kinfolk and friends. But the gifts mostly are of material things. The consumer shouts almost drown out the voice of the spiritual message of God’s peace. Can God’s peace really come this year?

### **Christmas does seem to be more like a stable mess than anything else.**

If we are honest with each other there’s lots of smelly mess all over the floor. Life seems to present us with three options. The past is messed up. The present is a meaningless parade of expectations that are never quite met. And the future holds only mess and misery. If we are honest with ourselves, Christmas does indeed bring out the messiness in our world, in our families and in us.

### **Zechariah and Elizabeth demonstrate the messiness of family life.**

Zechariah was struck speechless when he questioned God while serving in the Jerusalem Temple. The angel Gabriel showed up and Zechariah did not believe his message. So, Zechariah ended up handicapped and out of work.

Elizabeth had been the talk of Jerusalem because of her inability to have a child. For years she lived semi-depressed with a negative spirit. Elizabeth’s expectations for her life were not met. Nothing seemed to have gone the way she hoped and dreamed. Then, Elizabeth finally became pregnant, but her husband couldn’t talk and was out of work. And, she got a message that her distant cousin Mary was coming to visit. Mary was pregnant before marriage and Mary’s parents are seeking to save her the embarrassment of growing big in Nazareth. Zechariah and Elizabeth’s family is in a royal mess! It’s more like a stable than a home.

The interesting thing is that it usually takes an awful mess before we are able to see the presence of God in our midst. We usually need to be on the edge, before we can hear God’s still quiet voice.

Elizabeth saw Mary for the first time and her negativity stopped when her eyes were opened. She experienced the power of God in her life. Her attitude turned around. Her focus shifted from herself to God. She saw possibilities instead of problems. The mess turns into a message of the Messiah’s birth. God turned her world upside down! Listen again to Elizabeth when she says to her cousin Mary:

***“You’re so blessed among women, and the babe in your womb is also blessed! And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me? The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears the babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy. Blessed woman, who believed what God said and believed every word, would come true!”***

Dear Elizabeth teaches us something very important.

- In the midst of the mess, look for God.
- In the midst of the loneliness, frantic anxiety, and tumultuous conflict listen for God.
- When the dark mess of the dark stable seems to overwhelm your mind and heart, open up your soul and experience God’s presence deep within your very being.

Elizabeth experienced one of those moments when God’s Spirit touched her and she was lifted up beyond herself. She was not in control. She did not have a Bible verse to quote or a doctrine to defend. All the mess of her life opened her up, and she was ready to experience God. Elizabeth proclaimed with praise and thanksgiving the incredible message of God’s saving action. The Messiah is going to be born. The long awaited, long looked for, long anticipated action of Almighty God was standing right before her!

Elizabeth could have rationalized her feelings away. She could have said that she had indigestion or a bad cold. She could have been jealous that God chose her young cousin instead of her. Elizabeth could have been so absorbed by her own feelings that she missed God’s message. She could have missed the moment, but she did not. God got through. God taught her in that day that God is always present. God is never absent. God is and will work in the mess of the world for the salvation of the world. Elizabeth just experiences what has always been right there in her eyes. It takes the mess of her family, through the message of her cousin Mary to see the power of God in her midst.

Is this Christmas more a stable mess than a true Christmas in your life? Are you struggling with your marriage? Is there a mess in your family with one of your children? Are you living with a broken relationship that eats away at your soul like a canker sore eats away in your mouth? Are you overwhelmed with the financial burden of this season? Are you lonely, depressed, or in grief? Are you concerned about your job security? Is your home in foreclosure? Do you just feel like a mess?

If so, take heart! God is right there with you. Through your mess you can find God’s Messiah. In the darkness God’s light is kindled. In the deep darkness God’s light shines forth. Let the mess of this season be the opportunity for you to experience God in deeper and more profound way than ever before.

- Open your eyes and see God before you.
- Open your ears and hear the angels singing God’s song of hope for you and for the world.
- Open your mind and find God’s clear direction for your life.
- Open your heart and find God’s ultimate security of eternal unconditional love.
- Open your soul and find the assurance of God’s gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

God wants you to know that God loves you right now! It is Jesus Christ who turns Christ ‘mess’ into Christmas! Let today be the time your eye shifts from the mess of the stable to the Messiah in the cradle! Christ is the message bringing order out of chaos, light into darkness, and power into powerlessness. Christ stands before you ready to lift you up. Christ is ready to let this Christmas be the time you sing with Elizabeth the songs of blessing and praise to Almighty God. Let this Christmas be the time you find the strength from Christ who is within you to begin to change the mess into God’s message of hope.

This Christmas end a quarrel.  
Seek out a forgotten friend.  
Dismiss suspicion, and replace it with trust...  
Write a love letter.  
Share some treasure.  
Give a soft answer.  
Encourage youth.

Live out your loyalty to Christ in word and deed.  
Keep a promise. Find the time.  
Forgo a grudge. Forgive an enemy.  
Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Seek to understand.  
Examine your demands on others.  
Think first of someone else.  
Appreciate everybody.  
Be kind; be gentle.  
Laugh a little. Laugh a little more.  
Take up arms against malice. Decry complacency.  
Express your gratitude.  
Go to church.  
Welcome a stranger.  
Gladden the heart of a child.  
Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.  
Speak your love.  
Speak God's love.  
Speak it again.  
Speak it still once again.  
Speak God's love with your life!