

HE COMES TO LIFT US UP

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard E. Bieber:

- We thank God and praise God for an event which brought hope back to this world.

- We even now hold fellowship with the One whose birth we celebrate.

Reading Christmas scriptures and singing Christmas songs would mean very little if Jesus himself could not draw near to us even now, and speak to us and fill us with his life. What a wonderful thing to know that he stands among us, and that he is here to do for us the same thing he did for Mary and the shepherds and the wise men, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the woman at the well.

Jesus is here to lift us up...in every way to lift us up.

- To lift us up out of our fears.

- To raise us out of our discouragement.

- To bring us up out of whatever bondage we're in.

- And make us blazing servants of the Most High God.

And He lifts us up the same way he lifted Mary.

Mary was lifted up first by having her eyes opened to see the unseen.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Luke 1:26-31

Now Mary had been going about her life unaware of the awesome things happening around her in the unseen realm, when suddenly this divine messenger who was normally invisible to human eyes stands before her and speaks. From that moment Mary's life is never the same. Now Mary is a woman of vision. She sees beyond the visible to the things of God, and by that vision she enters the kingdom of God.

The same Lord who was behind Mary's vision comes to us to lift us up, by opening our eyes to see the unseen. We've been chained for so long to the world we apprehend with our senses. But the real world, the world behind the visible, the world we have to apprehend with our spirits has been largely closed to us. Jesus desires to touch our eyes so that we can begin to see the kingdom of God more clearly. And once we begin to see the kingdom of God clearly, we'll have little desire for anything else.

Second, Mary was lifted up, by having divine life put within her.

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the son of God." Luke 10:34-35

Mary's body became an earthen vessel filled with divine treasure ... What an awesome thing!...

- she was still Mary,

- she was still an ordinary woman,

but within her was a life that held the divine and human together in an awesome mystery ... a life that was destined to wash away sin and restore the earth.

Mary did not know in every detail what this life within her was destined to do. But she knew that the life was there ... burning inside her and that was all she needed to know to be filled with joy.

And this same Jesus comes to put this same life within us. His life to live within us, to dwell in our earthen vessels,

to shine forth from these earthen vessels to heal and restore and save others.

The whole object of Jesus' coming and dying on the cross and rising and sending his Spirit was so that his Spirit, his life, his burning word could live within us. What could be more uplifting to the earthen vessels of our lives than to be filled with the heavenly treasure of Jesus' Spirit?

Third, Mary was lifted up by being given a purpose to fulfil in God's kingdom. - -

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38

And from the moment she accepts her call, and for the rest of her life and through all eternity, Mary is the handmaid of the Lord - the servant of the Messiah who is taking form in her womb. And this purpose never left her. This purpose was her life.

So the Lord comes to us to reveal to us afresh, or perhaps for the first time, our purpose in his kingdom.

"You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bring forth fruit. And that your

fruit should remain."

He comes to lift us up,

- by opening our eyes to see the unseen,
- by putting his life within us,
- by giving us a purpose to fulfill in his kingdom.

But there is one barrier which must be removed before Jesus can lift us up: the barrier of our own vanity.

Jesus cannot lift us up if we're busy trying to lift ourselves. He can only lift us if we settle down to reality and let him do the lifting.

It's a principle built into God's universe (and what a blessing when we begin to learn it).....

- Whoever humbles themselves shall be exalted.
- Whoever exalts themselves shall be abased.

Jesus was the incarnation of this principle. He humbled himself and the Father exalted him.

...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:6-11

And every life Jesus raises into his Father's kingdom follows this same pattern.

- They humble themselves before him.
 - They accept their low estate.
 - They become poor in spirit.
 - They turn and become like little children in their hearts,
- and Jesus raises them up.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

None of us can begin to see the kingdom much less enter it until we empty ourselves of our vanity, our secret self-idolatry, and become poor in spirit.

But when we do become poor in spirit, our eyes open, and there stands Jesus before us, and he lifts us up out of our mire like he lifted Peter out of the Sea of Galilee that stormy night.

Notice who is chosen to carry this divine life in her body and give birth to this child who is God in the flesh ... a Jewish country girl ... and she knows why she is chosen....

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden."

Luke 1:46-48a

....the low estate of his handmaiden. And regarding her low estate God lifts her up.

"For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Luke 1:48b-49

God doesn't need a queen to give birth to his Messiah. He doesn't need a movie star or an opera singer. He needs an earthen vessel that knows very clearly she is an earthen vessel and gladly accepts the fact that she is an earthen vessel so that he can exalt her in his way.

Jesus came to people who were nothing ... and knew that they were nothing in themselves ... and made them servants of the Most High God.

- He raised Peter out of the dust,
- He lifted Mary Magdalene from total desolation,
- He took Zaccheus out of his money tree.

The only people Jesus could not raise up into the glory of God were those who were busy exalting themselves. All he could do for these people was call them to repentance.

"Come down friend, before you're brought down." "Humble yourself friend, before God will have to humble you."

But, for the humble ones, the broken ones, the wounded ones, the weeping ones, Jesus did for them what he did for Mary ... he raised them up and he gave them life.

Jesus is among us to lift up the lowly ones. All we have to do is empty ourselves of our vanity, our self-righteousness, and admit with Mary our low estate ... even if we feel we've done pretty well for ourselves in this world ... to remember in the sight of God, in the face of our own impending death, our estate is very low indeed. All we have to do is admit it, accept it.

Why is it so hard for us to say,

"Lord Jesus, I'm needy! I'm needy!"?

If we'll only do that. If we'll only draw near and say,

"Please Lord, regard the low estate of your handmaid.

Please Lord, regard the low estate of your servant."

.....he will lift us up.

- He will open our eyes to see the unseen.

HE COMES TO LIFT US UP

- He will put his life within us.

He will give us a purpose to fulfill in his kingdom.

Are we willing to humble ourselves before Jesus now, so that he can lift us up?

O Living Lord, who rose from the dead, never to die again, may your power sustain me in this walk of faith. May your Resurrection Life flow from heaven, through me, to the life I touch.