



Lifeline

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...a Christmas greeting from John and Jackie



*God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. **For nothing is impossible with God.**" "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said."*

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"***

*The time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.***

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "**Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.**"*

*There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. **Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.***

Mary responded to God's Word in childlike humility and faith, receiving the miracle of Jesus in her womb. Elizabeth responded with a shouting proclamation when she saw Mary, for she knew in her spirit Who was in Mary's womb, though Mary was only a few days pregnant! Even John the Baptist, waiting to be born, knew Jesus had arrived and leaped for joy! When the shepherds heard from heaven they rushed to Bethlehem to see this miracle baby -- and then spread the word about Him everywhere! Simeon saw that miracle baby and knew in his spirit that he had seen the Christ. He was ready for heaven! Anna also, on seeing baby Jesus, knew in her spirit who He was. She gave thanks to God and spoke to everyone about Him!

Lord, help us to receive like Mary the presence of Jesus inside of us. Inspire us to shout out the His blessings just like Elizabeth! Energize us to leap for joy over Jesus just like preborn baby John did! Make us excited like the shepherds to spread the news about Jesus all over the place! Open our spiritual eyes like Simeon, to see that God's salvation has arrived on the earth in Jesus Christ! And make us like Anna, telling everyone about Him who is longing for God!

Merry Christmas!

John and Jackie

