

Mary's Song "The Magnificant"

Luke 1:46-56

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me as I begin reading in verse 46. Luke records that Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my savior, for he hath regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. He that is mighty have done to me great things and holy is his name. His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with his arm and He has scattered the proud and the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats. He's exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped to serve in Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." And Mary abode with her, that is Elizabeth, for about three months and then she returned to her own house.

Christmas is without a doubt, a time to sing. We love to sing at Christmas and we love to sing Christmas songs at Christmas. I did a little research on the internet, Spotify and Echo Nest music catalog. You'll find there, 914,000 Christmas tracks that represent 180,660 unique songs by 63,711 artists. There are recorded in Christmas songs about 1 million songs. That to me is amazing. And every Christmas, the song list gets added to by the hundreds. So there's over a million songs at Christmastime. Not all of them sacred. Some of them are secular, but we love to sing songs at Christmas.

I looked up the top 5 recorded Christmas songs, starting with number 10. It starts with Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas. I'm not sure we'll sing that here at Revival, but it's a great song. Number nine is God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen. Number eight is Away in a Manger. Beautiful song. And my favorite number seven, What Child Is This? Number six was the first Noel. Number five was Holy Night. Oh, Holy Night. Number four was White Christmas. Number three was Joy to the World. And by the way, Joy to the World is actually originally written as a song about the second coming of Jesus Christ. And it fits the first coming, but it's about his second coming. And then number four was White Christmas and mostly recorded by Bing Crosby. That's a pretty amazing song. But Joy to the World is one of my favorites. Jingle Bells, number two. And the number one recorded Christmas song, top on the top 10 list is Silent Night. It's recorded over 7,000 times.

We love to sing at Christmas, but did you know that the first Christmas song ever recorded was recorded by Luke, which is known as the Singing Gospel? And it was sung by Mary and it's called The Magnificat. It's taken from verse 46, the first statement in the Latin translation, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." So we call it commonly The Magnificat. And it's a song that has been sung by the church for almost 2,000 years. Now, as we look at this song of Mary, I want to give you the background in the setting, we started in verse 46. Mary has already received the announcement from the Angel Gabriel that in her womb is tabernacling the Son of God. I believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. That's one of the miracles of Christmas. And this

young teenage maiden girl, this peasant girl from Galilee, Gabriel visits her and says, "You're highly favored, you're blessed of the Lord and you're going to have a child."

And she says, "How can this be seeing I know not a man? I'm not married, I haven't been intimate with a man. How can I have a child?" And Gabriel made it clear that, "The power of the highest would overshadow thee, and that holy thing that is in your womb will be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit." And the Bible says, "For with God everything is possible." Amen. People say, "Oh, how can a virgin have a baby?" With God, everything is possible. Christmas is about miracles. And it started with the virgin birth.

Now, her cousin Elizabeth, had been told that she was going to have a baby. She was older, married for many years, but she was past the age of having children. And she conceived in her womb and it was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. So she had been pregnant for some time before Mary. But when Mary hears that Elizabeth is pregnant, she has so much joy and excitement, she rushes the 50-mile trip to her cousin, Elizabeth, and the two pregnant women get together and talk. Pregnant women love to get together and talk, don't they about all the issues? I don't know what they talk about because I've never been a pregnant woman, so I don't really know. But I would've loved to have been a fly on the wall in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth and hear Mary and Elizabeth talking about the miracles in their womb.

So only about three months away, she tarried, she stayed till the birth of John the Baptist it would seem, she finally is there with Elizabeth and her heart is so filled with joy, so filled with excitement that she breaks forth into praise and into song. Now, a couple of things before we look at this song. Mary's song shows her knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures. Even though she was very young, she was filled with the Word of God. Charles Erdman says about this song that "The verses form a perfect mosaic of Old Testament quotations." Could it be that God chose Mary as his instrument because her heart was so full of the Word of God? I believe so. He found her a willing vessel and a woman that was filled with the Word of God. So as she sings this song, it's full of Old Testament scriptures and connecting with the Old Testament.

And then secondly, Mary's song parallels the song of Hannah in the Old Testament, but it does differ a bit. Hannah's song is a shout of triumph in the face of her enemies. Mary's song is a humble contemplation of the mercies of God. R. Kent Hughes says, "The Magnificat was a pungent, profound, divine human composition." I love that. So Mary's speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she breaks forth in song and prays to God. Now, there are three things I want to point out about The Magnificat and the Song of Mary. If you're taking notes, you can write them down.

Number one, we see Mary passionately magnifies the Lord. Verses 46 and 47. "She passionately magnifies the Lord." And we want to know what that means. What does it mean to magnify the Lord? Look at verse 46 and 47, Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Now there's something else you need to know about Mary's song. Mary's song is classic Hebrew poetry. Classic Hebrew poetry. Now with Hebrew poetry, it isn't rhyme or meter or rhyming words. Hebrew poetry uses what's called parallelism.

Parallelism. And parallelism, what you do is you make different statements that mean the same thing.

So she says the same thing in different ways. Let me point it out to you in verse 46 and 47. Verse 46, she says, "My soul does magnify the Lord." Now using Hebrew parallelism, she says in verse 47, the same thing, but in a different way. "My spirit rejoiced in God, my savior." They basically both mean the same thing, but she's speaking poetically. In a few verses, she will speak prophetically, but she's now saying that, "My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my savior." But the question we need to ask is what does it mean to magnify the Lord? What does it mean when our spirit rejoices in God, our savior? Well, let me tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that we actually can make God bigger. We can't change God. He's immutable. We can't make God bigger.

In my study at home, now I have to confess I have a magnifying glass. I got my glasses on, and sometimes it's like woo, that's too small. I have a little magnifying glass. In a few years I'll be preaching with a magnifying glass, if you haven't gotten rid of me sooner. "That dude can't see. We need to get rid of him." But you don't actually make something bigger with a magnifying glass, but it appears bigger, it looks bigger. So what we're doing is we're not making God bigger, but we are understanding Him better and we're comprehending him in a more wonderful way. He becomes bigger to us. So what does it mean? Write these down. It means that with our minds that we, from the scripture, the Word of God learn about his greatness and His attributes, that God becomes bigger to us.

Let me encourage you, especially this Christmas, think deep thoughts about God. Engage your mind. Christmas is not about just sentimental things, and I love the sentimentalism attached to Christmas. It's fine. But if we forget to use our minds and to think great thoughts about God, shame on us. And there's nothing more important for you as a Christian to understand the nature of God and the character of God and the attributes of God. Sometimes when I'm counseling somebody that's troubled or bothered, I say, "You need to study the attributes of God. You need to meditate on God's faithfulness and God's love and God's mercy and God's power and that God is with you. All the attributes of God can bring great comfort to our hearts." Amen. So acquaint yourself with God and be at peace.

I believe that doctrine leads to doxology. You might want to write that down. Doctrine leads to or gives birth to doxology. What I mean by that is the more you know about God, the more you will worship God. The more you know about God, the more in love you will be with God. Some of you have a small God in your own mind and God is so awesome. God is so amazing. You need to magnify God in your mind and your understanding. In the Book of Romans, the greatest theological treatise that Paul ever penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the first 11 chapters are doctrine. The first 11 chapters are doctrine. By the way, that's our next series on Wednesday night, the Book of Romans. You don't want to miss that.

And for 11 chapters, he gives theology and doctrine and truths about God. And then what does he do when he comes to the end of the 11th chapter? He goes, "Oh, the depth of the wisdom of

the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his ways? They are past finding out. Of him, and to him, and through him are all things." So he breaks forth in doxology at the end of 11 chapters of doctrine. And then what does he do? In chapter 12, verse 1, he says, "I beg you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies unto God, a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable act of worship." So in light of what God is, in light of worshiping God, you surrender all to him. So if we're going to magnify God, we need to understand him with our minds.

And then secondly, we magnify God with our lips. As we think greater thoughts about God, our lips magnify and rejoice and praise the Lord. As I learn about God in his word, I sing about God with my lips.

And then thirdly, our soul and our spirit. Verse 46 and verse 47. "Our soul and our spirit." And it could be that again, she's talking about her heart, her inner person. She's not necessarily doing a teaching on the difference between soul and spirit. She's saying, "In my heart, my inner spirit, my life, my whole being, I worship you, I magnify you, I praise you, oh Lord." That's what it means with our soul and our spirit. In John chapter 4, verse 24, when Jesus was meeting with a woman at Jacob's well, and she had pointed to Mount Gerizim and said, "Our fathers as Samaritans, our fathers worship in that mountain over there. You Jews, you worship in Jerusalem. Where's the right place to worship?" Worship is not a place. Worship is a person. And Jesus says these words to her.

He said, "The day is coming and now is when true worshipers will worship how?" In spirit and what? "In spirit and in truth." And when he said spirit there, he's talking about your inner person, your inner spirit. He's not talking about the Holy Spirit. He's talking about your heart. And now in your heart, you worship God. Now it's fine to raise your hands. And I encourage that. Fine to clap, fine to kneel, fine to stand, fine to do expressive things in our worship. But if your heart is not engaged, it's not real worship. Isaiah the prophet said about the people of Israel, "They drawn near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from it. They lift their hands, but their hands are full of blood."

You know what God is looking at this morning when you came to church? He's looking at your heart. He's looking at your heart. I know anytime I preach, I can tell, I've been around long enough, there are people that don't want to be here. They've kind of got their arms crossed, they're looking at me like, "Get this over with Preacher Boy." I won't point you out right now, but I know who you are. You're busted. And it's no big deal that your body's here. That doesn't get God all excited. God want your heart. Do you just come to church and think about other things or is your heart engaged? Is your mind enlarged? Does your soul magnify the Lord? Does your spirit rejoice in God who is your savior?

And then fourthly, I believe we magnify God in corporate worship just as we're doing right now this morning. When we gather here as God's people, the saints in the sanctuary, there's something special about corporate worship. I know that many Sundays people have to be in overflow or people are upstairs in the loft and things like that. But would to God that everybody could come into the sanctuary, everybody was together, everybody's worshiping God. Don't let

anything hinder you from gathering this Christmas with God's people and worshiping God. You know, the church attendance actually goes down in December. People are too busy with Christmas, too busy celebrating his birth to go to church and worship his birth, worship Him who came. What a marvelous thing when we sing songs of praise, I think God in Heaven says shh to the angels. "They're singing right now at Revival. I want to listen to that." And then it actually blesses God's heart.

So we magnify God in our minds with our lips, with our soul and spirit and corporately. Psalm 34 verse 3 says, "Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together." So let's do that this Christmas. Let's gather and worship God. But notice secondly about Mary's Magnificat, Mary's purpose for magnifying the Lord. This is the why. First we saw the what and now we see the why. Mary's purpose for magnifying the Lord. And this is found in verse 48 to 50. "For she hath regarded, she says, the lowest state of his handmaiden." Now she's giving us the reasons her soul magnifies the Lord, because God regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden. The word handmaiden is a reference to a woman slave. It's the lowest of society, a woman slave. "For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things. And holy is His name. His mercy is on them." Verse 50, "That fear or reverence him and it goes from generation to generation."

Now, if again you're taking notes, write these down. I'm going to give you the reasons we should magnify the Lord from this text.

Number one, because of the divine condescension, because God condescended or God came down to humble Mary. And at Christmas, God comes down to us, Mary's soul magnified the Lord. Notice that in verse 48, "He has regarded or taken notice of the low estate of his slave girl, his maid servant." So she saw herself as a humble slave, as a humble servant, God came down to Mary that first Christmas. And I believe the common theme running throughout the nativity accounts and all through scriptures is just that: God comes down to the humble. And that's what's so cool about the Christmas story. I love the little people of Christmas like the shepherds. You know that shepherds could not testify in a court of law. Their testimony was invalid because they were such bad people. They were so low on the social ladder, they were despised. You could not get lower than a shepherd.

And guess who God made the announcement of his son's birth to, the very first people? Shepherds because guess who God comes to? The lowly, the humble, the empty, the hungry. I realize there were rich men. They were wise men who came from afar, but when they come, they knelt down and they worshiped the King, and they gave him gifts of gold and frankincense of myrrh. So the rich are humbled and the humble are lifted up. I think of Anna, I think of Simeon, the little people of Christmas that God ... I think of Joseph and Mary, these peasants from Galilee. So God comes to those who are humble. Mary was a humble maiden who lived in an obscure village that God had chosen here. I think of my own life. Why would God come down to me? Why would God come to John Miller? Why would he save me? Why would he open my eyes? Why would he forgive my sins? Why would God come down to me?

In Psalm 34, verse 18, it says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart. And he saves such as it be of a contrite spirit." So we should praise God because of his condescension as he came down and he descended to us.

And then secondly, because of divine blessing. In verse 48, she says, "From this generation, they shall call me blessed." Now we need to be careful that we don't worship Mary. We need to be careful that we don't venerate Mary. By the way, notice she says "My spirit," verse 47, "Rejoices in God my savior." She needed a savior. And please don't take offense to this, but if you need a savior, it's an indication you're a sinner. Sinners need a savior. And the Bible says, "All have sin, all have fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says "There's no one righteous. No, not one." Though Mary was blessed, though Mary was highly favored, though Mary was used of God, she needed a savior. And if Mary needed a savior, guess what? You and I need a savior. Amen.

And she acknowledged that this is my savior so we praise Him for his divine blessings. Mary was indeed blessed because tabernacling in her womb was the Son of God. But did you realize that as a Christian, tabernacling in your heart is the Son of God. The same privilege that Mary had, we have as Christ dwells in us.

Let me give you a third reason we should magnify and rejoice in God, our Savior. Because of his divine perfections. We worship God because of who he is. And from verse 49 to verse 50, we see the divine perfections that Mary praises, that God possesses. First one, notice verse 49 is his power. "For he that is mighty have done to me great things." Notice Mary ascribes to God power. "He that is mighty have done to me great things." Did you know that God is omnipotent? That means that God is all powerful, that God can do anything. God has all power. Psalm 99, verse 9, "Exalt the Lord, our God and worship at his holy hill for the Lord our God is holy."

That's the chief attribute by which God has revealed Himself and his Word. It's not His love, it's not His grace, it's not his mercy. Those are marvelous attributes. But the number one attribute that God has revealed about himself in the Bible is his what? Holiness. If God is anything, God is holy. Amen. God is a holy God. What does it mean? It means that he is separate from sin. It means that he is perfectly righteous and absolutely completely free of any darkness or sin or evil or wickedness. By the way, that cannot be said about any human being. God alone is perfectly holy.

Now we're to grow in his likeness and in holiness, but we won't be without sin until we get to Heaven. God is holy. So we worship Him for his power. We worship for Him for his holiness, and we magnify and worship Him for His mercy. I love this, verse 50. "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." Now, what is mercy? Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. I'm so glad that God did not give me what I deserve.

First service when I made that statement, everybody said amen. I'm like, "Thank you very much. I'm like, it's true of you too." You guys are just kind chewing your gum and looking at me like ... Guess what? You need to be thankful God hasn't given you what you deserve. Amen.

Because if God gave us what we deserve, where would we be right now? You said it. I didn't. That's where we'd be right now. So think about how merciful God has been to you. Did you wake up this morning? God showed you mercy. Have you got life and breath? God has shown you mercy. He's given you what you don't deserve. And "His mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation."

The Bible says "God's mercy is great. God's mercy is rich. God's mercy is abundant. God's mercy is everlasting." And in Lamentations 3, verse 22 and 23, "God's mercies are new every morning. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." I love that verse. When I turned to Lamentations this week and was looking that up as a cross-reference, I couldn't stop reading the Book of Lamentations. "Your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." The Bible says that "God's mercies and faithfulness reaches to the clouds." It's so high we cannot exhaust it. It's deeper than the sea. It's wider than the ocean. God is so kind and God is so merciful. No wonder Mary's soul magnified the Lord. We should magnify the Lord for his mercy. And by the way, worship means to ascribe worth, is to magnify God for who He is and all that He has done.

But let me point this out thirdly about the Magnificat. We saw what it is to magnify. We saw how or why we magnify, but now we see Mary poetically and prophetically magnifying the Lord. I want you to notice that verse 51 to the end of the song, verse 56. "He hath showed strength with His arm." I want you to notice that she speaks in the past tense. This is what God has done. So not only does she use parallelism, but she used what's called the prophetic past tense. "God has showed strength with His arm. God has scattered the proud with the imagination of in their hearts, He has put down the mighty from their seats. He's exalted them of low degree. He has," past tense, "Filled the hungry with good things. The rich, he has" past tense, "Sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he speaks to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."

Now, Mary again is speaking poetically, Hebrew poetry with parallelism, and she's speaking prophetically about what has happened in the past God will continue to do in the future. So she's using the past tense to describe the future. That's what we mean by prophetic past tense. She's using the past to describe what God will do in the future all in light of the coming of Messiah. The world changed when Jesus came. And let's point out to you the changes. I want you to look with me at this text.

First of all, what had God done in the past? Verse 51, "The proud, He scattered them."

Secondly, in verse 52, "The mighty, He put them down."

And thirdly, in verse 53, "The rich, He sent away empty."

Now, all of these are saying the same thing. This is Hebrew parallelism, but in different ways, takes the proud, takes the mighty, takes the rich. He scatters them, He puts them down, and He

sends them away. "Hath not God brought down the proud, the mighty, the rich and the noble in the humble birth of his son Jesus Christ." I think about the past, Daniel Chapter Four, the story of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar, I call him King Neb for short, strolling along the walls of Babylon, these big, thick, wide, high beautiful walls, looking over this great empire of Babylon. Remember what he said? He said, "Is not this Babylon, which I have made with my power and my mind." It's not this Babylon that I have made. What happened to King Neb? Boom. He flipped out. He went crazy. He went out into the open field and his hair grew long like feathers on an animal. And his nails grew long and he lived out for seven years in the open field and ate grass. Can you imagine your king out in the field?

There's some proud people today, I'm thinking If you don't like grass, you better cool your jets dude. I was thinking of some of the dictators of our world. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have made." God is able to bring them down and He has done it over and over and over again in history. And guess what? Through the coming again of Jesus Christ and the second coming, the mighty, the proud, the rich are going to be brought low when Christ returns in power and glory. But there is a parallel contrast, and this should fill your heart with joy. Notice in verse 50, God also had mercy on them that fear him. In verse 50, "If you fear or reverence God, God has mercy on you." And then notice in verse 52, God exalts them of what? Low degree, the humble. And then notice in verse 53, he fills the hungry with what? Good things. It's all what God has done and will do.

I love Psalm 107 verse 9. "He satisfies the thirsty and He fills the hungry with good things." It's probably that verse that Mary was thinking of and she was drawing from it when she sang her song. So if you fear the Lord, He'll have mercy on you. If you're humble, He'll exalt you. If you are hungry, He will fill you with good things. So here's my question to you. Do you fear God? Do you have a awe and a reverential fear of who God is? He will show your mercy. Are you humble? Are you low? Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall inherit the earth." He takes the humble and He lifts them up. And if you're low, He will lift you up. And thirdly, I ask, are you hungry? Are you hungry? If so, He will fill your heart with good things.

He will satisfy the longing of your soul. He can do what no one else can do. Only Jesus can fill your thirsty soul, your hungry soul. You say, "Well, Pastor John, how do we know that God will really do this for me? How do I know that He'll lift me up, that He'll fill my heart with good things?" Because God always keeps his promises. Notice verse 54 and 55, this is what God has done. "He helped his servant Israel in remembrance of His mercies." That means God remembered the promise to send the savior of the world. The child tabernacling in the womb of Mary was a fulfillment of God's promises. God promised to send a savior.

As he spoke, verse 55, "To our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." What did God say to Abraham? He said, "Through your seed, all the nations of the earth will be," what? Blessed.

Not seeds. Seed. Singular. That seed is a reference to Jesus Christ. Amen. But what does it remind us of? God has always kept His promises and God will always keep His promises.

Now, I from time to time, forget things that I promise. And if you put your hope in me, there's a good chance that you could be disappointed. "John promised me this, or John promised me that." I'll do my best, but I have limitations. I can't control the weather. I can't control the economy. I can't control me getting sick. I mean, there's things that I can't do and I can't control the fact that I'm forgetting things. But guess what? God can control the weather. God controls the economy. God never forgets anything. When he makes a promise, guess what? He keeps it. Isn't that awesome? God always keeps his promises.

And when you see the Christmas trees and the lights and you hear the carols and you see the gifts under the tree and you drink your eggnog, which I don't like, where did that ever come from? My wife loves eggnog. God have mercy. But when you experience Christmas, remind yourself, God keeps His promises. Amen. God always keeps his promises. And guess what He's promised to do? "Your sins and your iniquities, I will remember no more." God's promised to forgive you. God's promised to restore you and hee you and God's promised us a future and a hope. Jesus promised that He would come again and receive unto himself that where He is, we will be also. So when I think about Christmas, I think about this. God keeps His promises and my response, "Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together." Amen.