**The Songs of Christmas**

**Mary’s Music**

**Luke 1:46-55**

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We started our advent series last week, The Songs of Christmas, by looking at the first of four songs in Luke’s gospel which teach us about Christmas. We looked at Zechariah’s Christmas Chorus, seeing that true freedom is the freedom to serve God the way we were designed to, in righteousness. This week we look at Mary’s Music in Luke 1:46-55.How do you find peace when you have issues pressing on your mind. In the last couple of weeks, I laid awake during the middle of the night three times unable to sleep because of things on my mind. Maybe you have things on your mind too. Maybe it is conflict or brokenness in your family. Maybe it is the threat of recession, or the inflation rate is putting a strain on your budget. Maybe it is that Christianity is losing favor in our society. Mary had a lot on her mind too, an unwed and pregnant teenage girl in a conservative Jewish community. So, if life is weighing on your mind, Mary’s song has a message for you.

The backdrop to today’s song is a fifteen your old girl who is pregnant with the Savior of the world. The angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her that she would be with child. Finding herself pregnant some months later, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who confirms that Mary is indeed the mother of the Lord (1:26-45). Mary’s response to this news is worship, joyful gratitude in song. We find two points in this passage, the nature of worship (1:46-47) and three reasons for worship (1:48-54).

**The Nature of Worship (1:46-47)**

Worship is Mary’s response to what God has done (46-47). These two lines are poetic parallelism, they make similar statements, the second line develops the idea in the first. Mary’s soul magnifies the Lord, and her spirit rejoices in God my Savior. The human soul or spirit points to her heartfelt response to God. Worship is more than just going through the motions on a Sunday morning worship service (Mat 15:13). Magnify means she exalts the greatness of God in doing the impossible, the immaculate conception. Then in the second line, magnify the Lord is described as a rejoicing in God her Savior. We exalt the greatness of God when we joyfully respond to who God is and what he has done. The Christian life is a joy filled life. Christians should be the happiest of people! Mary describes God as Lord and Savior. She recognizes his sovereignty as Lord, he rules all things at all times while as Savior, she recognizes that God saves sinners like her. Her worship is a joyful and grateful response to who God is and what he has done. I quoted Wheaton College president Philip Ryken last week, but it is worth repeating, he calls them “*the last of the Hebrew psalms and the first of the Christian hymns…the gospel is and must be musical…what He has done must be celebrated in song*.”[[1]](#footnote-1) We have looked at the nature of worship (1:46-47) and now let’s consider Mary’s three reasons for worship (1:48-56).

**Three Reasons for Worship (1:48-56)**

Mary worships God because He is mindful, mighty, and merciful. First, God is mindful of Mary’s circumstances, he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed (48). The word looked, translated as mindful in the NIV, means to look attentively with personal concern.[[2]](#footnote-2) God sees all that you are going through and is mindful of your misery. The psalmist wrote, “the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry (34:15).” God sees and God hears and when the time is right, God acts. Her humble estate probably refers to her social status in Jewish culture, young and poor. Mary is subservient and submissive. She is humbled that God would choose her. And she marvels that this birth will change history; all generations will remember her as blessed for giving birth to the Savior. The light of truth has shaped her mind and the heat of that truth has warmed her soul. If you want spiritual intensity, the life of God in your soul, then read and mediate on it until it lights a fire in your soul. Mary worshiped because God is God is mindful of her situation and secondly, God is mighty (49, 51, 52, 53).

Like Zechariah’s song, Mary’s song is filled with the language of the Exodus: mighty, the strength of his arm, scatter the proud, brought down the mighty, helps his servant Israel, and remembering his covenant with Abraham. The New Testament writers see in the coming of Jesus, a new and better Exodus. Mary is relishing in God, the mighty one, like the psalmist does, “who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle (24:8)!” The Mighty One loves to display his might to the humble and lowly who trust him. God has shown his strength with his arm, scattering the proud, brought down the mighty and sent the rich away empty (51-53). God’s power structures are not aligned with the world’s power structures in which the powerful and the mighty and the rich use their power and wealth for their own selfish ends to build up their own kingdoms. The powerful, the mighty, and the rich are examples of those who are self-sufficient, who see no need for God and are often opposed to God. Remember the king of Babylon, king Nebuchadnezzar? He reigned over a huge empire that included all of modern Egypt to Iran and Syria to Saudi Arabia. He had plenty of reasons to be proud! But the Lord humbled him (Dan 4:28-33). A man who thought himself a god was made a beast to learn that he was but a man (Dan 4:37). The proud and self-sufficient will be brought to repentance or face eternal judgement. Mary worshiped God because he is mindful, mighty, and finally, because he is merciful (50, 54).

God loves to be merciful to those who fear him. Mercy is God’s covenantal faithful love toward those who deserve punishment. If grace is getting what we don’t deserve, then mercy is *not* getting what we do deserve. We can trust God because he is faithful to his promises. He helped or came to the aid of his people Israel in keeping with his promises to Abraham, an offspring. God is faithful to his promises. What does it mean to fear God? Remember Israel at Mount Sinai, the people feared God and pulled away from him. But Moses challenged them, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin (Ex 20:18-21).” Listen to their response, the people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. There is a fear that rises from unbelief causing one to turn from God and a fear that arises from faith that causes one to draw near to God. Draw near to God today. Worship God because he is mindful of your situation. Worship God because he is mighty, doing the impossible. Worship God because he is merciful, he comes to the aid of his people. Here is my big idea, worship is the joyful and grateful response to who God is and what he has done. Mary worshipped with a joyful and grateful heart because she believed God is mindful, God is mighty, and God is merciful. And like Mary, God calls us worship with joyful and grateful hearts because he is mindful, he is mighty, and he is merciful.

**Life Group Questions:**

Icebreaker: Tell us your name and a favorite Christmas carol?

Head

1. What do the miraculous pregnancies of Mary and Elizabeth teach us about the power of God?
2. What does it teach us about how God works in the world?
3. Mary is magnifying God because he has done great things for her. What are some of them?
4. What is the role of affections in our relationship with God?
5. In this section of Luke’s Gospel, older persons figure prominently in the life of Christ. What do they teach us about faith and the role of older persons in the church today?

Heart

1. How do you define joy? Is it the same as happiness?
2. What are reasons God is a source of joy for you? How do you express this joy to God and to others?
3. Can you describe a time when you struggled to believe a promise of God?
4. Describe your experience of worship alone or corporately?
5. Have you ever had to wait a long time for God to fulfill a promise? Did you find it difficult to wait? What was difficult and what was helpful to you?

Hand

1. Now that you've seen why Mary worshipped what do you want to change in your worship of God?
2. Next time you have to wait for some promise to be fulfilled in your life what will you do?
3. What is god telling you to do as a result of this passage?

1. Philip Graham Ryken, [*Luke*](https://ref.ly/logosres/rec63lu?ref=Bible.Lk1.39-55&off=8284&ctx=+must+be+a+musical.+~What+God+has+done+in), ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bdag?ref=Page.p+368&off=3519&ctx=gaze+upon+Js+2%3a3.%0a%E2%91%A2+~to+look+attentively+) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)