

Luke 1:46–55

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[0 : 00] And our scripture reading this morning comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 46 to 55. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[1 : 05] You may be seated. Good morning.

The volume okay? It's not a jodian company. We'll be jodian people adjusted. If you're seeing you guys actually encourages me.

Bundled up under blankets. That's actually strengthening. Or else it would be myself speaking to Dave.

But let's pray this more. Father, Father, speak, O Lord, as we come to you. To receive the food of your holy word.

Take your truth. Plant it deep in us. Shape and fashion us to your likeness. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[2 : 13] Amen. I learned a few weeks back that there is a temperature that iPads don't like.

And we are close to it. This morning, we take a break from the Psalms of Ascents.

And move to another album in the Bible. We can call it an EP. Compiled by Luke. Four songs from various authors or artists.

Three which we'll explore in these coming weeks. One from Mary this morning. One from Simeon. And another from the heavenly hosts themselves.

They're all tethered to the birth narrative of the Lord Jesus. And it shouldn't surprise us that musical lyrics accompany the most significant birth in all of human history.

[3 : 12] We carry forth a lyrical tradition in North America. This time of year brings up a flood of music that represents all sorts of things.

Whether sacred or secular. The festivities of this season are accompanied by song. And this morning, we are in the Magnificat. Mary's song.

It has been sung or recited as early as the 8th century. It carries significance not only to Christendom, but to me as a Christian.

It was an evening Christmas program in the Chinese church that I grew up in. And there I sat among maybe 100 or 200 attendees in the back of an auditorium.

It was in a Masonic temple. We rented from the Freemasons. Kind of ironic. But there I was, furthest from the stage, as far as I could be.

[4 : 14] Because I was uninterested in hearing testimonials about Christmas. Advent scripture readings or watching Christmas song performances. A few buddies and I, this is probably early high school.

We sat there inattentive. Uninterested. And what we were doing, we were leaning back in our chairs. Seeing how far we can go without tipping.

And it was time for my younger siblings, I'm the oldest of four. To perform one of their pieces on stage. And it happened to be the opening lines of the Magnificat.

My soul magnifies the Lord. And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. They were to sing it as a round a few times.

And what would unfold next could only be described as God's gracious mercy in my life. As the song began, I lifted up my head and I began to listen.

[5 : 18] And my eyes began to well up. To borrow the language of John Wesley, my heart began to be strangely warmed. And I began to sob bizarrely to my friends.

I think it probably appeared as hysteria to some. I'm sure my friends thought I was in pain. But in reality, I was at peace. What seemed off was actually joy dawning in my heart.

My inattentiveness was caught off guard. At the most unexpected time. When I was not interested at all. When I was apathetic and unconcerned for my very own soul.

I recognized that heaven was paying attention to me. That heaven was concerned for me. And mercy was pursuing me.

Thus, my conversion process began. And I share this because what was Mary's song on that evening quite literally became my song.

[6 : 29] And my desire this morning is that it becomes your song as well. It is my conviction that as we've been in the Psalms. And now we're in a few new songs in the Bible.

But the songs of the Bible ought to find their way to the lips and the hearts of the believer. Mary would tell you, this is my story. This is my song.

And I would sing to you. This is my story. And this is my song. And may you leave this morning knowing that this is your story. And it can be your song.

I titled this message, The Melody of Mercy. The Melody of Mercy. In my study, it emerges the prominent notes.

And I trust it will emerge in our time together. You'll see it explicitly mentioned in verses 50 and 54. It weaves itself through the song and anchors itself in the lines.

[7 : 26] And the song has two movements which I'll paint for us. And I've broken them up in this way. The first is this. We find mercy for Mary.

Mercy for Mary. And secondly, we will see there will be mercy for many. Mercy for Mary. Mercy for many. A lot of M&Ms.; Mercy for Mary.

It's a song of thanksgiving prompted by a visit to Mary's relative, Elizabeth. It's not too difficult to imagine two expectant mothers in celebration.

What are you due? What is his name? How are you feeling? And that's the scene that unfolds prior to this song. It would have been jubilant.

Elizabeth's womb, as we have already seen, shares in the joy as the child in her womb leapt for joy upon meeting not only Mary, but the Lord Jesus. Both were pregnant with sons.

[8 : 28] Both conceptions were miraculous. Both bore those who would be great in the eyes of the Lord. Mary bore the Son of God. Elizabeth bore John the Baptist in whom there is no one greater, Jesus says.

Both would attest the impossibility of it all. A barren womb. A virgin conception. Both would attest there is nothing impossible for God.

And during this visit, Mary apparently breaks forth in song, in thanksgiving, and in praise. As she is being praised by Elizabeth in verse 45, Mary praises God, beginning in verse 46.

The hero of the story would not be Mary. It would be the Lord. God, her Savior. And she writes, or she sings, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.

These parallel lines express the overflow of her heart. Magnification. My soul quite literally extols, exalts, enlarges, amplifies, makes big the Lord, if possible.

[9 : 38] Her soul delights, rejoices, celebrates in God. And her praise is directed to God, the source and giver of all that is good.

And these next few verses unfold in a way that I can describe as a testimonial. This is what the Lord has done for me.

She's bearing witness to what God did for her and in her. This is her story. And this is her song, verses 47 to 50.

She gives us a glimpse of the God whom she worships. What is he? Who is he? What does he do? In a day where reliable surveys and statistics demonstrate the growing number of people disinterested in religion.

We call them maybe atheists or religious nuns. We find that there are more and more abandoning the notion of believing in God.

[10:44] Yet I don't think it's because of a lack of desire to believe in God. Rather, I think for many it's their understanding or their conception of God that is misguided.

They don't want to believe in a particular type of God. They don't want to believe in a God that is maybe vindictive or always angry, unrelenting in judgment, driven by fury and anger, self-serving and selfish, unsympathetic and merciless.

And I wouldn't blame them. I wouldn't want to believe in a God like that either. And here Mary sings of who God is. And I think what's so important is that when you have an opportunity to say something about God, magnify him, magnify him, make a bunch of him, tell them he is far different than what many perceive him to be.

Mary sings of God who is Lord and Savior, merciful and mighty, looking to bless. It's her testimony. And notice Mary's condition.

It's entirely changed because God acts. The Lord looked and lifted her from her humble state. We don't know the details of Mary's life, but it can be deduced that she probably came from humble means.

[12:12] She was a maidservant, probably classified as a peasant. She traveled quite a distance to Bethlehem, indicative of the fact that she didn't reside in a town that was significant enough to hold the census.

She lived a life that was bereft of abundance. But all of a sudden now, abundance would flow.

A fleeting life, some may say, would now become an unforgettable life. Why? Because as she writes, as she sings, because God has done great things for me.

The song is a celebration of the mighty acts of God on behalf of the meek and the marginal. It lifts a similar verse from another song in the Bible, bound in 1 Samuel, with a gal by the name of Hannah. Hannah was barren, deeply distressed and troubled, plagued by great anxiety. And in her own words, she thought of herself as a worthless woman.

[13:24] Verse Samuel 1.16. She lived before the Lord, the Bible tells us, with great anguish until the Lord acted on her behalf. And that song that erupted out of Hannah now comes and falls on the lips of Mary.

Why? Because the Lord acted on her behalf. The Bible is replete with songs that respond to the mighty intercession of God on behalf of his people, who cannot deliver themselves, who cannot save themselves, who cannot help themselves.

And this will be the mercy of God when he uses his might to deliver, to save, to help those in a lowly estate. Those who cannot help themselves, I assure you, find in the Lord Jesus Christ, infinite help.

This is mercy for Mary. This is her song. Unless we be mistaken, we have to understand why all generations will call her blessed. She's not blessed because she did a wonderful thing for God.

She's blessed because God has done something wonderful for her. She's not blessed because she's humble or lowly in heart. She's not blessed because of her faith demonstrated in the verse 45.

[14:50] She's not blessed because of anything inherent in herself. She is blessed because God is merciful. Luke makes something of Mary, who is bearing the Son of God.

Yes, he does. But he makes much more of God's mercy, which clothes the Son of God. God's mercy toward her has compelled her soul to magnify the Lord and rejoice in God, her Savior.

Mercy for Mary. Mercy for Mary. Secondly, mercy for many. Verses 50 to 56.

Mercy for many. The mercy now shown to Mary is now widened. And you'll see that in verse 50. To any who fear God. To any who choose to submit to God.

This would be their song as well. His mercy would be for those who fear him from generation to generation. This mercy is now made widely available to those who give themselves to God in all generations.

[16:02] God would act on behalf of any. Of many. For many. For he did what he did for Mary, he can do for many. The first person singular camera angle is now zoomed out to see the third person angle.

Third person plural angle. Luke reinforces this. Just. Luke reinforces this. That these final verses are just filled with divine action or verbs.

My kids can tell you what verbs are. It's filled with verbs. And the song is written in such a way that it captures God, let's just say, flexing.

That's the modern lingo. He's flexing. He has shown strength. He has scattered. He has brought down. He has sent away. He has exalted.

He has filled. He has helped. All God. All him. Doing all the work. And the theme of the second half of the song is that of reversal. The proud are scattered.

[17:09] God, the mightier one, is bringing down the mighty. God, the mighty one, is raising up the lowly. The hungry are filled. While the rich become impoverished.

The song displays this new kingdom that this king will bring. It's not one founded upon the principles that you see at work today. I won't fully unpack it, but the song is purposeful in the word pictures it uses.

The Bible wants you to know that when Jesus arrived, everything, every aspect of life would be transformed. The mighty thrones.

Are you thinking about political powers? Governments? Regimes? Well, let me tell you about the political power found in the Lord Jesus.

The hungry refer to the social nature of a people, of a kingdom. The rich refer to the economic nature of the kingdom.

[18:10] In other words, the kingdom that Christ brings addresses all facets of life, whether it be political, economic, or social. This new king, this new baby is coming in to undermine and overtake whatever existing political, social, and economic facets that are taking place in the world.

It flips the rules and the principles of the world, the visible world upside down. It won't be founded upon pride. It won't be founded upon the demonstration of might or acquisition or wealth.

It would be entirely other. Entirely other. The proud, mighty, rich would stand insignificantly before the Lord. The self-confident, the military leader, the self-accomplished, the one who sits upon hordes of wealth, will find no status before God.

This kingdom will operate like no other. It is governed like no other. It is run by like no other. And what is the other, you may ask?

It would be founded upon mercy. It would be founded upon divine mercy. It would be governed by God's gracious mercy.

[19:36] The kingdom would follow a mighty king who would give up his throne. It would follow an exalted king who would humiliate himself in order to exalt others.

It would see a king, instead of laying a banquet for himself and the elite and royalty, it would see a king lay a table, not for the privileged, but the impoverished.

It would see the bank of heaven empty its treasury in the Lord Jesus to acquire more sons and daughters. Why? Why? Because of great mercy.

And if you were to follow Luke's gospel, you will find it replete with this message. Over and over, what he wants you to know is this kingdom is governed by God's gracious mercy.

The humble will be exalted. The hungry will be filled. The helpless will be helped. You can ask the leper. Literally eroding.

[20:40] Outcast. Forgotten. Neglected. Best left to die remotely. In his desperation, he called out. He called out.

Fell on his face. Begged the Lord Jesus to make him well. And what did he experience that day? Mercy. Mercy. You can ask the paralytic.

Tell me about that day. Well, I lay there. And four of my friends undid, unraveled a mud straw group and dropped me in.

And there I lay before a man I semi-heard of but had never met. And I asked that man, that mighty man, when he asked me what I wanted, I said, I wanted to walk.

And you know what happened? I not only walked, but I walked out forgiven. And what is that? Mercy. Why mercy?

[21:41] Luke would tell you about the powerful centurion who had a beloved servant. Nearly dead. Nearly dead. He had the disposal of money and resources.

But could not heal or save him. And in desperation, this beloved centurion sends his servants to Jesus and says, Jesus, can you? Can you come?

Actually, not even can you come. You don't need to come. You don't even need to touch him. You don't even need to think about him. Just say the word. Mercy. And he'll be healed.

And so it was. And how was it so? Mercy. Mercy. You can ask the dead, the widow of the dead son.

In that moment. Husbandless. Sonless. With no protection or provision for the rest of life. And as the body left her house.

[22 : 45] And as she wept. There. The man, Jesus. Said, don't cry. Don't weep. And commands the child. Back to life.

Why? How? God's mercy. And Luke would tell you over and over in his gospel. There are many attestations. God's mercy. And Luke would tell you.

Of a criminal. Sends to death. As a spectacle to onlookers. Condemned as evil. Guilty as charged. Unfit for life. And it just so happened to be that criminal's lucky day. Because as he hung there. Little did he know.

That the man who hung next to him. Was the son of God. Keeping insults. In one moment. Finding mercy. In the next.

[23 : 48] Punishment to paradise. And when you find him in the new kingdom. Ask him how he ended up there. And he will tell you. What I'm telling you. What Luke is telling you. What Mary is telling you.

I ended up here because of mercy. Mercy. Mercy upon mercy. And this morning. Whether you find yourself online. Or on lot.

The text is clear. Mercy is available. For you. In the Lord Jesus. There is mercy for men. There is mercy for men.

There was mercy on me. There is mercy. For you. The text ends. With a recounting of God's help. For his people. Israel. In short. God is keeping a promise. That he made. His promise.

[24 : 44] I'll summarize it in this way. Was mercy. And if his promise. Be mercy. Then you can be assured. That for the rest of your life.

His provision. Will be mercy. You will never run out of God's mercy. There will always be enough. May it be your story.

May it be your song. May your soul magnify the world. May it rejoice. In God. Your soul.

Father. We. Close this morning. We need. Mercy. Mercy.

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. In every. Condition. Mercy. And so. Father. That you lavish upon it. Us.

[25 : 42] Your extravagant mercy. Mercy. That helps those who are helpless. Mercy. That meets those. Who are lost. Mercy. That rescues those.

Who are doomed. Lord. As we enter into song. And ask the question. As we sing the lyrics. What child is this?

May our hearts erupt. With the knowledge. That this child. Is one filled. With mercy. Will give. His very own life.

To that end we pray. We ask these things for Jesus sake.