Luke 1:46–55 "Magnify the Lord!"

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Date: 30 November 2025

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?
The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.
What I'm about to say might be a bit of a trigger for some people, and I don't apologize for it, because it's important to talk about. But I just want to let you know, because the text has actually something very important to talk about in terms of sexual violence against women. And so I know that there might be women here who have been victims, or maybe even being victims of sexual violence. And so this could be a bit hard. Even me saying this could be a bit hard. All I could say is, if it is hard, we would love to walk with you and pray with you. And if you need some help in pursuing justice, we would love to walk with you as you pursue that. But I'm not just saying this just because it would be a good thing to get your attention at the beginning, although I probably, most of you thought when you were coming to church today, I wouldn't begin my sermon with something like that. But during this season of Advent, we're going to do four songs of the Savior. And all of them are in the Gospel of Luke.
And the first one we're going to look at is what's called the Magnificat, or Mary's Song. And it's sung by Mary after she, well, we'll get to it in the story, but it's before the birth of Jesus. Next Sunday, we're going to look at Zedekiah's song after John the Baptist is born and before the birth of Jesus. And on the third Sunday, we're going to look at the song that the angels sang to the shepherds to announce that Jesus was born. And then on the Sunday before Christmas, we're going to look at the song that Simeon sang over the baby Jesus. And that's called the Nunc Dimittis, for those of you who are familiar with that from maybe classical music or liturgy. And it's very interesting. So if you turn your Bibles, it's, I'm going to, well, it was going to be in Luke chapter one. And here's the thing about it. So what goes on before Mary's Song? If you don't know what goes on before Mary's Song, then Mary's Song doesn't make any sense. And so what's happened just before this is that the angel Gabriel has appeared to a young woman by the name of
[3:21] Mary. And Mary was probably 15 years old. In those days, engagements were about a year. So she probably would have been married around 16. So she's probably 15 when he has this visit from the angel and she would be in her home. And she's Jewish. And she's of lower working class background. And she lives in Nowheresville, even in terms of the Jewish world and in terms of ultimately the colonizing power of Rome, the great Roman Empire. She's a very, very, very low status. And she, if, if, and they would think Jerusalem was Nowheresville. So this is like Nowheresville squared where she is. And she's in, in her house, probably. And all of a sudden, an angel appears from God and speaks to her. And when he speaks to her, he says that she's favored. Basically, he says that the Most High God would like to use her to be the vehicle or the means by which God, the Son of God, would enter into the human story.

That the great invasion, which has been promised in the scriptures for centuries, is about to take place. And that the Son of God himself will be born through her. And after he says these things to

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her, Mary asks some clarifying questions. Because she's not dumb, she's smart. And she knows how babies are born.
One of the problems we have regularly reading the Bible is that we think because we have things like TikTok and Instagram, we're smarter than older people who didn't have those things. Although, as increasing research shows, you might actually be smarter before TikTok and Instagram than after you've gotten immersed in it.
But she's smart. She knows how babies are born. And she says, well, how on earth is this going to be? I've never known a man sexually. I'm a virgin. And then Gabriel, on behalf of God, says, well, the Holy Spirit's going to overshadow you.
And God is going to do a miracle within your womb. And you will become pregnant. Now, it's very interesting, I think, that Luke is the only one of the gospel writers who tells this story. And it's interesting for this reason. Luke was a pagan who became a Christian.
[5:29] That means that the guy who wrote this was a man who would have worshipped the Roman and Greek gods and goddesses as part of his just normal habit. He would have been involved in the worship and sacrifice into these deities from childhood.

From childhood, it would have been deeply ingrained in him. And then somewhere along the line, we're not told how, he becomes a Christian. He leaves behind the pagan deities and pledges himself to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
He pledges himself to the God revealed in Jesus and to Jesus himself. And so Luke, after he becomes a Christian, by the way, if you go back and read it from the start, what he did is he went and decided he would go and talk to as many eyewitnesses as he could find and put together the true story of Jesus, write a biography of Jesus, and he did that while many eyewitnesses were still alive.
But he probably put this thing in here in a way that maybe the Jewish writers who wrote the other biographies of Jesus from a time of eyewitnesses might not have thought of. Because he would have known that when it comes to this point in the time of the story, that an angel, a representative of God, has come to speak to Mary, to say that this is what the God of, the triune God would like to do, he would know, and maybe this was how he experienced it the first time, there would be a bit of a catch in his chest.
And that's because the gods of the ancient world raped women. The gods of the ancient world were serial rapists.
[7:04] And so he would have, when he heard this story for the first time, he would have been going, maybe even expecting a certain particular thing to happen. But what happens would have blown his mind and blown his entire religious categories.

Because the angel, the representative, the triune God, waits for Mary's consent. Waits for Mary's consent.
In the ancient world, a Roman, I mean, not that all men would have been rapists, but a Roman man, a Greek man, a well-educated man, a common man, would have said the idea that a woman needs to give consent is against all piety and against all reason.
Because surely all of our worship and our understanding of the gods is that the strong and the powerful can do whatever they want without the consent of other people. The gods regularly send others out to die on their behalf and for their own glory.
And obviously that's the case. And obviously that's just what reason tells you, that the strong can do what they want with the weak. And that's how society is organized. It's part of our cultural norms, that those things are completely and utterly valid.
[8:24] And it would have not just been in the Roman world, but throughout the entire ancient world, where things like harems and all were in fact just a commonplace. Because of course, once again with harems, is that powerful men can accumulate as many women as they want, usually without their will, to satisfy their sexual desires.

And in the history of the entire world, all of a sudden, there is something which blows these categories completely and utterly up. You see, in the ancient world, the gods can rape and the powerful can rape, then why can't I?
If I'm a man and I'm strong enough. But if the Most High Triune God needs consent, every man needs consent, with no exception.
And it's very interesting that this story isn't just sort of like one of those things where it's a little tiny aside, buried in a whole pile of other types of things that you just sort of all of it, you just skip over.

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This is actually part of the central, part of the, if you were to take the whole story of Jesus, and that's unbelievably foundational for all Christians, and yet even within that, if you were to take a couple of the high moments, like if you were to tell some kids about the high moments of the story of Jesus, the story of the birth of Jesus would be one of those high moments in that particular story.
[9:47] And so right at that high moment of the high story is this idea of consent. And the history of thinking begins to change at this moment.

I told several people this week, some of my non-Christian friends, I had two opportunities to talk to people who are outside the Christian faith this week, and they happened to ask me about my sermon. And I said, well, you actually might find this very interesting.
You know, I said, the average Canadian thinks that a woman needing to give consent for sexual knowing is just common sense and reasonable. But that's not true.
It's actually a Christian idea. I tell them what I just told you. It's a Christian idea. It came into the world through the Bible. That's how the idea came to be. And so for people now in the world who think it's just reasonable, it's in fact a memory of a memory of a memory of a memory of a memory of this central story which has now formed you.
And in fact, I said, if you think about it for a second, one of the two or three governing stories that govern how Canadians think is the naturalistic understanding of evolutionary theory.
[10:57] And at the heart of that theory is this, the strong eat the weak, so the strong survive and the weak die. And there's no way you can go from the story of the strong eating the weak so that the strong survive to therefore women need to give their consent.

That doesn't fit with that story. So the only reason that that story has an overwhelmed consciousness yet in the West is because of the memory of the memory of the memory of the memory of this Christian story, which now seems to be mere common sense that any thoughtful person would come to understand.
And the key to this, of course, whole story is that it's true. Because if it's not true, when I was in high school 100 million years ago, a very common button that many people would wear, sort of interesting they'd wear it to school, would be question authority.
Another version was who says. They'd wear it into class. Who says? Question authority. Well, if this story is just a story amongst other stories, then it actually, you can just say, well, who says?
But Christians believe this is what actually happened. It's a true story of what actually happened.
And so in the story, if you just turn in your Bibles to verse 36, sorry, verse 38, it says this.
[12:23] And when the angel says to Mary about these things, and he says, nothing will be impossible with God, in verse 38 of chapter 1, Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, the doulos of the Lord.

That's what the word literally means, doulos. Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. And there's these two very, very powerful parts of her answer.
She first of all says to the Lord, not to the angel, but to the Lord, I will be your doulos. That means it's a certain type of servant. It's not like a slave, but it's more than just like somebody that you'd hire to clean your house.
It means I desire to belong to you. And as belonging to you, I trust that you will be the one who will care for me and provide for me. And whatever you say, I will do.
I will do. That's her response to the angel. And it's a very, very powerful prayer. And we're going to return to it in a moment in terms of all of its significance.
[13:22] But that's her response to what is said. And it's within this whole context that you now have to understand the Magnificat, which we're going to look at.

And here's how it goes. Immediately after this, Mary goes to see a relative named Elizabeth. She's had a different type of miraculous. Oh, I missed something. The moment that Mary says her consent to God, God does a miracle and implants a zygote connected to the womb of Mary.
Mary says yes. And God creates a zygote connected to the womb of Mary. And Mary's pregnant. It's a miracle. She's now pregnant.
She goes to see Elizabeth. Elizabeth and her. Elizabeth ends up having a prophetic word and pronouncing some prophetic words over Mary. It's both a very charismatic and a very musical thing that she sings over her.
And after she says, after Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and pronounces this prophetic word in song over Mary, Mary then does what's called the Magnificat.

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[14:33] And so if you turn in your Bibles, it's Luke chapter 1, verse 46 and following. And just as you're turning that, something here which is really, really cool, which is this. It's at least since the early 700s, Christians who've decided to worship and pray together at night have included this as part of their time of Bible reading and prayer, the Magnificat.

Since the early 700s. That means there's 1,300 years that many Christians have thought that if you want to spend time on a Sunday evening or any evening reading the Bible and praying, you should include this as one of the readings to help form you in terms of how to pray and how to read the Bible.
Like, isn't that cool? And in the Greek part of the world, the part of the ancient world that spoke Greek, not Latin, that begins around the same time when they'd put it in the morning, not the evening.
And you get an echo of this or a remnant of all of this that if you go and get the Book of Common Prayer, you'll see that it is, in fact, one of the regular canticles of evening prayer, even song.
And anyway, here's the song and here's what goes on in it. So we have the context of God approaching Mary. She gives her this yes. She's now pregnant with the Most High God, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and she bursts into song.
[15:56] What we're going to do, I'm going to read the whole song. It's just very short. Then we'll circle back and we'll look at it, three things in particular that are very important to us. And so in verse 46, it goes, Mary said, my soul magnifies...

By the way, one of the things is, if you go to do even song, there's an even song way of singing it. My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
Anyway, that's if you do the prayer book. But it's also been the case that people have metrical versions of this. And during our offertory, we're going to sing the Magnificat with a metrical version that goes back to around the year 1600.
So pretty old. And we're going to sing it during the offertory as I'm setting the table for the Lord's Supper. But here's how it goes right now. My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on... Here we are in Ottawa in 2025 reading this text that she's blessed.
[17:03] That's just fulfilled prophecy. You think of all the different prophecies that oracles would have made in pagan temples around this time. Nobody knows anything other than maybe an ultra nerds, nerds, nerds, nerd doing a PhD dissertation in classical studies looking for some remote topic of the ancient world that nobody's written on and they might find it.

Absolutely nobody other than their PhDs, even their PhD supervisors probably bored with it, but they have to do it so the person got the PhD. But this is true. It happened. Like here we are looking at it. I'll read verse 40.
It's cool. Like we don't realize. That's true. It happened, right? Look at verse 48 again. 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 and the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.
[18:09] 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.

That's Mary's song, the Magnificat. Now, why do you think that this might be something that for 1300 years many Christians have thought would be a worthy part if you're going to have some Bible reading and some prayer?
Let's also read this. Why would they have thought that? And they'd put in a creed in the Lord's Prayer. A couple of things like that to help form you. Well, let's look at the words. I think you'll start to see why they would want to do it.
So first of all, look at that. We'll go to verse 46 again. My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. And soul and spirit, it's just creating some poetic parallelism there.

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But here's the first thing to understand. We moderns, when we think of this, we think of the soul as being something sort of wispy and immaterial somewhere in here.
[19:09] But early Christians would have said they would have looked at us puzzled if we thought that because we tend to think of things like soul as something a bit emotional and hence therefore wispy and changeable.

The ancients would have understand that not that the soul is hiding somewhere in the body, but that the body is in the soul.
Now there's, that's something to blow your mind. The body is in the soul. In other words, what a human being is, is I am an enfleshed or embodied or material soul.
And so when she says my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, she's not saying this little tiny bit of emotional bit of me, no, do you have soul, is what's magnifying the Lord.
All of her is magnifying the Lord. That's, that's, and so here we can start to see why it's something that Christians would think is good to read because it's saying my mind, my will, my affections, my imagination, my creativity, my desires, my sexuality, my use of money, my relationship with other people, my relationship with power, my soul, all of me magnifies the Lord.
[20:29] And what does this word magnify? It's very easy to get that misunderstood because it's not a word that generally is used in modern English. And a lot of modern translations avoid using it. But it's, I think, one of those cases where I can understand for devotional, you don't, you don't want to avoid words that people don't understand.

But in a church, it's part of a church's obligation to help us understand words. And so the word magnify, when we think of it, we tend to think of it as like I'm a really big human being with a really big mind and I need to see some little tiny bit of bacteria.
So I get a, you know, I get a something that I can magnify it because I'm big and that's small. And, and, but you get in there within the idea. That's not what it's saying. You know, the idea of magnify is to, to, to make big, to make much of, to see as being really important as something that, whether it's in your inside voice, speaking to yourself or your outside voice that you want to, you want to think about and say, wow, that's really big.
That's really awesome. That's really glorious. That's really beautiful. That's really true. Wow. You want to have the wow and, and have things that you say wow about and that's what magnifying means.
So it says, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my savior. And, and, and, and some of us Christians say, okay, I can start to see that because surely that would be one of those things when you're reading the Bible, you want to be hearing things that, that not, not the woes, but why, why God is so great and why we need to make sure that he's part of our internal thoughts and dialogue and, and, and, and, and things that we say, rather than having things that we say all the time of boy, you're stupid, boy, you're ugly, you know, boy, boy, you're a failure, you know, boy, you'll never announce anything, you know, gosh, you're a failure.
[22:09] Like, rather than having that type of an internal voice going on in your mind, wouldn't it be better to talk about how great the Lord is? How great the Lord is?

To realize that maybe part of the task of being a Christian is to change how the talk inside your head goes and the talk of your outdoor lips as well, your outside lips as well. But there's even something more than this because, you see, a lot of people would say, and you can think of here different people, maybe you can think of the type of person, you know, likes going to bars and very secular, or maybe you can think of somebody who's in a boardroom or, you know, a university professor, very secular, and they hear something like that and they do this.
Lean back and say, well, okay, I mean, if that turns your crank, that's fine. But I don't magnify things like that. I don't magnify things like that.
If that turns your crank, that's fine. Now, you know what's so funny about that? They just magnified themselves. They do magnify.
They just don't want to magnify the Lord, but they're quite happy to magnify themselves. Right? I'm not that sort of person. Like, you little people, you do it, but I'm not that type of person. So here's the thing.
[23:25] The question is not, will I magnify? The question is, what are you currently magnifying? That's the question.

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And are you even conscious of what you magnify? Or are you the victim of your unconscious magnifying? And if you become conscious of what you magnify, should you really magnify that? Like, are you able to change what you magnify? Let me tell you, for the average Canadian, and probably the, and when I say average Canadian, I conclude average Christians, the average Canadian magnifies fear.
fear. The average Canadian magnifies fear. Your algorithms push it.
I know I'm 100 million years old, and, but I'm guessing that if in the very dawn of things you go back and there was going to be five or ten centimeters of snow, and if you had something that you could look up, or maybe you would just call up the weatherman or whatever, it wouldn't be like the apps now, which have these bold red things to make you afraid of all the snow that's going to come.
[24:48] Like, if I had told my parents, oh, mom and dad, there's going to be like seven or eight centimeters of snow, maybe I shouldn't go to school. They would have cuffed me on the side of the head and said, off you go to school.

Right? But they want to make you afraid about the weather. Not about the weather. I mean, Ottawa, it snows in Ottawa. Like, if you're just a brand new Canadian and you've come from, like, Hawaii, and they didn't tell you there snows in Ottawa in January, you need to ask your money back, right? Because it snows, right? Like, obviously there can be lots of snow, but I'm being very trivial. But the fact is, we magnify our fears. That's one thing that Canadians do. We magnify anxiety and we magnify worry.
That's a common type of thing. It's why so many people want to do drugs and drink alcohol and do a whole pile of other types of things because we magnify fear. And that's separate from the fact or connected to the fact, actually, that we magnify ourselves, we magnify sex, we magnify money, we magnify power, we magnify academic accomplishment, we magnify our creative accomplishment, we magnify our reputation, we magnify, we magnify, we magnify, we magnify, and we come together on a Sunday night to say some prayers as people who are magnifying these things and Mary teaches us to magnify the Lord.
And my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. See, the fact of the matter is that many of the things that we magnify actually only make us more anxious.
[26:22] If you magnify money, you never have enough money. If you magnify academic achievement, you never have enough academic achievement. If you magnify your looks, bad news, everybody ages.

Wrinkles and dimples where they're not cute are the future of every person. But some people might say, here's the problem.
They'd say, okay, that all sounds good, George, but I mean, the Savior bit? I mean, why on earth do they want to say, make you say, my soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior? I mean, George, that's one of the things which I've never really understood. about, you know, about Christianity. So, I mean, there's two things here, George, that I don't really understand.
The first one is this, that, you know, so you want to make God really big. You know, that's what you're really sort of saying, right? So you want to make God big. You want to understand him as really being big and worthy of extolling and understanding just how big he is.
[27:41] You want to have all of that and then you want to make big the fact that you're going to be saved. But, George, here's the problem, George, that don't you think that it's better if God just taught me how to save myself.

Like, it sounds a little bit to me, George, like, you know those old movies from the 50s and the 60s where some man had to rescue a woman because women couldn't rescue or save themselves? And haven't we evolved to the point now where we understand that that's like a really dumb thing to teach people? Like, why teach women that men have to come and save them? Like, why don't we teach women that they can save themselves, that they can punch the bad guy, they can handle the guns, they can do the kicks, they can do the cleverness?
Like, and if that, if we've learned that about men and women, like, why, like, George, I don't understand this whole thing about why, so not only do I not understand how, just talking about how big God is, like, George, don't you think that this idea of big God, doesn't that just often just crush people?
Like, there's lots of religions, like, every religion really other than maybe paganism talks about the bigness of God, like pantheism, I mean, everything is God, that's bigger than you and, and Islam, God is huge and look at all the terrible things that come from it and, and so I don't understand why

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that just God being really big is something that would be helpful to me and, and reduce my anxiety. [29:01] If it did, like, that would be interesting and, and why, why this, all this talk about God needing to save me, it just sounds so like fifties and, and not in a, not in a good way.

Well, those are good observations. Let's look at how Mary deals with these types of, of problems that we might have with that, whether we say it out loud or just sort of in our soul because it's part of how our culture thinks.
Look at verse 46 again, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. Verse 49, 48, 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.
generation. Now, we'll just pause here for a second. This is the first of the two types of reasons about, you know, the types of problems we might have with this. I think when I was young, I would have thought that my greatest need was justice.
[30:15] I needed more justice from my teachers. I needed more justice from my parents. I needed more justice from my friends. Now, it probably is the case that I did need some justice from people like that.

But as I get older, I realize that my greatest need isn't justice. My greatest need is mercy. I mean, one of the things that we need to learn in marriage, I mean, you know, I probably would have heard this, that when you marry somebody, you're marrying a sinner.
You're a sinner marrying a sinner in marriage. But one of the things that really becomes very obvious as you get married, and maybe it's not obvious, it takes a while for it to penetrate people like me who had very thick skulls and are clueless, is a marriage won't survive unless the other person shows you mercy.
It just won't survive without mercy being shown. Because marriage reveals not only that the other person is a sinner, but marriage reveals how big a sinner you actually are yourself.
I actually am myself. And so what I really need to have any type of intimacy, and that even in friendship, what we often need in friends primarily is mercy.
[31:34] Now, what the Bible teaches isn't cheap mercy, but costly mercy and true mercy. Cheap mercy is where the powerful ignore justice for pet causes or favoritism.

We have a bit of a problem with that right now going on with the courts, that there's a problem, to talk once again about the sexual matters, that there seems to be a problem right now in the courts of judges deciding that they're going to dismiss minimal sentences or throw things out.
And that doesn't cost them anything. And a lot of Canadians are thinking that just makes no sense from a justice point of view that how they're treating people who are pedophiles and rapists and sexual violence, and they're getting passes, or privileged groups are getting passes, and it's causing a tiny bit of a start of a scandal, at least in some circles.
But they might say they're showing mercy, but they're not showing mercy. They've just thrown justice out the window. True mercy does not at all ever contradict justice.
And only the gospel and only the biblical faith makes that very, very clear. You know, it's not that well-known, but did you know that in Islam, I can't remember the surah, in Islam, everybody who dies goes to hell.
[33:00] And then before those jihadis who've killed people get to go to the Islamic heaven and have the perpetual virgins to their pleasure and delight, they actually go to hell first, and then Allah says he'll go to hell and he'll pick out those lucky ones whom he's going to send up to his heaven.

But even then, there's no type of justice. He just picks the people. But you see, here's where the story of Mary is so and unbelievably powerful and why it's so emotionally rich.
The story of Mary's song begins with this revelation that God, the Son of God, is about to enter into the human condition and enter into the human world. And he enters very lowly.
He enters the way we all enter, as a zygote, attached to our mother's womb and goes through the entire process of gestation and birth and a helpless infant and then works as a lower working class man and all of that.
And then this story is the beginning of a story that ends in Luke chapter 24 and before we get to that, we get to the point of the whole story that changes the story, which is God, the Son of God, dying on the cross despite the fact that he's innocent.

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[34:12] And we even get within that whole story that it's only in Luke's gospel we get the famous account of the two thieves who were crucified on either side of him. And if you read the other gospels, each of those two thieves called Jesus' names and insulted him for a lot of the day, but at some point in time, close to the time at the end when they die, one of the thieves, seeing Jesus and how he is and his silence and his dignity has a change of heart and rebukes the other person who's insulting Jesus and then turns to Jesus and in an act of very profound faith that none of us have.

He says, Jesus, can I be with you when you enter into your glory? And Jesus turns to him and says, today you will be with me in paradise.
See, in a sense, the whole gospel is pointing us to this point in time that because God is, Jesus is God, the Son of God, he truly can stand for every single human being. And so the justice that I need to have that falls upon me, Jesus says, would you, George, consider me to be your master and allow me, would you come into my life and allow me to come into your life so that the things that should happen to you that will completely and utterly ruin you forever, for all eternity, I am willing to have them fall on me because I want to show you mercy and the justice that should fall on you will fall on me.
so that you might know my mercy. And if you say yes to that, that you will be my servant and that you will let everything according to your word be true of me, then my word to you is that on the day of your death you will enter into my paradise, my kingdom.
And so in the death of Jesus, you see God's justice maintained and you see mercy offered to those like you and me who are far from God. and it's in that context then, look at what it says again in verse 50.
[36:24] And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. Now, you can go back and listen to my Ecclesiastes sermons about what the fear of God means. It's ultimately a term of intimacy and self-recognition and proper boundaries that allow proper love and you can go back and listen to them.

But did you get this? When you enter into that relationship, when in a sense you accept God's mercy, he's for you.
He's for you. Right now, today, every day, until you die, he is for you. Why would you not want to have that fill your mind and magnify him?
And what better thing can you have to magnify him than the knowledge that his mercy is for you in all of your problems and all of your mess and not for you in a way that there's not going to, you shouldn't still be concerned for justice, you should stand for justice, you should stand against injustice, but his mercy is for you.
That's how we're to hear the Bible. That's how we're to pray. We're to fill our minds with the greatness and beauty of God, the Savior. And why do we need a Savior?
[37:41] It's all here in the text. It's very interesting. Look at verses 51 to the following. And by the way, just two things before I read 51 to the following. The first thing is, you'll notice, you might say, well no, God hasn't fed the hungry and God hasn't done this and God hasn't done all of that, not in the way it's described, but there's an actual tense in the original language which doesn't exist in English and the tense is that there are certain things in the future that are so absolutely guaranteed certain that the only way to translate it into English is use a past tense.

So you can't change the past? This is so certain about the future you can't change it. That's what it is. The other thing, just as an aside, just skip down to verse 54.
He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. You can't spiritualize that. This is a very important text. It's not saying that you have to agree with every single thing that modern day Israel does.
It's not saying that. But what it is telling us is that God's not finished with the Jewish people. The promises he has made to the Jewish people have not been completely finished yet.
Just as an aside, it's really important because we live in a culture increasingly formed by anti-Semitism to understand that this is part of Christianity. God is not finished with Israel and the Jewish people.
[39:03] But go back to 51 and look. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.

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He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away. Now just sort of pause there. This sounds like a lot of Hollywood movies, doesn't it? Like the original Mighty Ducks. You get a whole pile of the really skinny nerds and the tiny nerds and the way overweight nerds and the nerds who can hardly brush their teeth.
They're so completely incompetent. And they come together as a team and they get the coach and they defeat the team of other 13-year-olds who all really look like they're 23-year-old men on steroids and the losers win.
And that's a common theme in movies and we all sort of like it. And a lot of people who are far more conservative might be bothered by texts like this because it sounds like the worst class envy possible and as if we're completely and utterly against rich people or people who are good at thinking and we don't like it on one level but in part of it we all like that.
We like the idea that the proud are going to be scattered their thoughts and we like the fact that this text says that those who are high and mighty on their high horses and their thrones are going to be toppled and we like that.
[40:17] But here's the problem. Years ago my wife and I would have times when we had to have a difficult conversation with somebody.

Not with ourselves but with somebody. And I started to learn that there was something I needed to say because I'd say okay yeah yeah I agree we need to have a difficult conversation with Bob.
But if by we you mean you're going to have that difficult conversation while I stand on the and you're like looking at you going way to go Louise you're doing great.
You go for it. Then I think that's a great plan. But if by we you mean I'm going to talk to that person while you look at me and give me thumbs up and smile then I think we have to find a different plan.
The same thing is going on here. Who is having their thoughts scattered because they're proud and who are on high horses? What? God's talking about me?
[41:26] I'm the proud one on my high horse and he's going to topple me and scatter my thoughts? We don't even think of that. Why do we not think of that?

That's why you need a savior. Because all God does is give you more power to be you? You're going to think that text applies to everybody other than you.
And let me tell you you talk to maybe if you're old enough you have kids and you say by the way do you ever think I'm proud or on my high horse? I don't think that's ever true of me. Well they might not say anything but inwardly they're thinking yes it absolutely does apply to you dude.
Dad. Mom. Or we might say that about our kids who don't think it applies to them. Everybody else sees that it applies to us. We just don't see it about ourselves. That's why we need a savior. In fact when Christianity goes bad it's when Christianity just becomes moral advice about how to save yourself and then it's no longer Christianity and all it is is legalism and judgmentalism and high horse righteousness and it's just a complete and utter train wreck.
Even if it's popular it's a train wreck. This text reveals I need a savior. I can't leave me to save me.
[42:46] I need God who loves me to be my savior. So that's the text. We read it it forms us to understand that when you understand that how big God is and how big is his love and that he relates to me regularly for mercy that he's always for me and even he even knows that I don't see these things about myself and he gently prods me to understand myself and the fact of the matter is is that we like humble people who are self-aware of the fact that they have some problems.

Maybe they're not nobody's perfect but we're drawn to people like that. Why wouldn't we have that type of why wouldn't we want to have that thought be that which is the big thought that we talk to about ourselves and to know that Jesus is forming us into this and forming us into understanding our need for mercy and those who receive mercy are those who give mercy and we're drawn to people who give mercy.
Why wouldn't we want these big thoughts to be the big thoughts that fill our mind day by day day by day knowing it happens in the context that we can come together on a Sunday and say honestly like we will in confession God I've had a really bad week.
I've had a week where I've magnified everything other than you and I've been on my high horse and I'm really proud and I am so glad I can come and hear the Bible and have the Lord's Supper and remember that Jesus died for me as a sinner and that your mercy is for me and you want me to say I'm this week help me to do it this week.
I invite you to stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

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[44:38] Father, first of all we ask that your Holy Spirit would do a gentle but powerful work in our minds and you know the things that we tend to magnify. You know those of us who magnify resentment, who magnify woes, who magnify fears, who magnify ourselves, who make money as if it's the most important thing in the world or power.

You know, Father, the things that we're magnifying that we're not even aware of and we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit through your word would gently convict us of these things that we magnify that are just ruining us and we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move within us so that we develop the habits of magnifying you in the context of joy, knowing you are our Savior and that you are for us, that you and your mercy are for us every day until we see you face to face. And we ask, Father, that day by day as we do this that we might be like Mary and say to you again and again and again, Lord Jesus, I desire to be your doulos, your servant, and may it be to me in all that makes me your word in my sexuality and my dealings with money and power and thinking about myself and others, may it be according to me according to your word.
I am your servant and help me to magnify you. And so, Father, we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen.

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