

# Mary's Song

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Our scripture reading this morning is from the book of Luke, chapter 1. Luke, chapter 1. We're beginning a new series for the next four weeks.

We call it Songs of Advent. And what we're doing is we're looking at four different songs in the Gospels. Either a song or a prophecy where someone is talking about what it means that Christ has come.

And so the first song we're going to look at this morning is Mary's song, which is famous. It's called the Magnificat, where she magnifies God. And we're going to read just a little bit before the song as well to give you a little bit of context of what's going on here.

So this is Luke, chapter 1, starting at verse 39. In those days, Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judea.

And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

[ 1 : 1 9 ] And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

And Mary said, 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 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.

[ 2 : 2 2 ] 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.

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home. Amen. This is God's word. Sometimes when you're reading the Bible, and you're trying to figure out what is this passage about, one way that you can get to the heart of the meaning of a passage is you can just ask yourself, is there a word that's repeated more than once, over and over again?

What's the most common word here? And this is a passage like that, where you know what this word is about, because the theme of it happens over and over again, and it's the word blessed. The word blessed happens here five times it's spoken.

And the whole scene is a celebration of the fact that Mary is blessed. She's blessed above all women. You see that in verse 42? The moment her cousin sees her, she says, blessed are you.

She cries out. She doesn't just say it. She cries out. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Mary knows that she's blessed in this moment, and she's so overwhelmed with that fact that all she can do is sing.

[ 3 : 43 ] I mean, can you remember the last time that you were so happy that you just wanted to sing? Maybe that's just not your personality, but that's where Mary is in this moment. And she has a reason to be. It's not just that she's like, you know, when I think of someone who's so happy they could sing, I think of Elf in the Christmas movie, where he's just happy, but he's happy for no reason.

It's a naive kind of happy. But Mary's happy because something has happened to her, and it makes her want to cry out. And Mary, when we think about Mary, we have to recognize that she's very unlike us in one sense, because she, it says it right here, blessed are you above all women.

She has been uniquely blessed by God because no one else has been given the privilege of bearing the Son of God in her womb. And yet, when you read the way that Mary talks about her own blessing, what you see is she realizes that what makes her the most blessed is not something that belongs just to her.

It's something that she shares with the world around her. There's, in this song, Mary teaches us about what it means to be blessed, okay? And what does it look like?

How can you grow in it? And how the birth of Jesus connects to that. And so what we're going to do this morning for just a few moments is to consider the heart of Mary's blessing. What is it that makes Mary blessed?

[ 5 : 04 ] What does she get in this moment? And there's two things. And the first that we're going to start with, it starts with seeing, Mary sees that she is seen by God.

That's one reason why she's blessed in this passage. She sees that she is seen by God. And, you know, she opens the song and she says, my heart magnifies the Lord.

She wants to make God known and make Him great. And then the first reason that she gives, you see there in verse 48, she says, why? For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.

So Mary's first reason for crying out with blessing is simply because she says, He has looked at me. God has looked at me. And I hope it's probably obvious to you that when she says that, she's talking about something deeper than just seeing someone with your eyes.

You know, God sees everything and He sees all people, but that's not the kind of seeing that she's talking about. Over and over again in the Bible, one of the ways that people who know God in Scripture praise Him is they say, He is the God who sees.

[ 6 : 14 ] So if you remember Hagar in the Old Testament, she actually named God the God who sees because she was a woman who was in a terrible situation, was unloved by everyone around her, and yet she knew that she was seen by God.

And so she called God the God who sees. Or if you remember in the book of Exodus, whenever God comes to Moses for the first time and He's going to tell Moses how He's going to rescue the people from Egypt, that one of the first things that God tells Moses is, He says, I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt.

And you know instinctively when you hear something like that, He's not just saying, I know that bad things are happening in Egypt. He's saying, I see it with my heart. I have compassion upon these people.

And that's what Mary feels in this moment. It's like when Carly and I are with our kids in some kind of public place, we'll look at each other sometimes because we've got a two-year-old that is just unpredictable.

And one of us inevitably will look at the other one and say, are you watching? And what we mean, we don't just say, do you see him? We're saying, when one of us says yes to that question, we're saying, I take responsibility for this child in this moment.

[ 7 : 28 ] And if he hits his head on something, it's my fault because I was watching him. That's a different kind of seeing than just noticing something. And that's the kind of seeing that Mary talks about.

She's praising God as one who sees her, that watches over her to protect her in order to help her. And it's not just that. She says, it's not just that he sees me.

He sees me in my humble estate. One thing that we know about Mary, you know, there's so little that we know about Mary and there's much less that we know about Joseph. One thing we know about Mary is that she was poor.

Her and Joseph were poor. And one way that you know that is because a couple of chapters later when Jesus is a boy and they go to make a sacrifice at the temple, they offer two pigeons as a sacrifice.

And that was the sacrifice that you made that was prescribed in the Old Testament if you were someone who did not have a lot of money. If you had more money, you would make a greater sacrifice. But two pigeons was the sacrifice of a poor person because that was all they could afford.

[ 8 : 32 ] So we know that Mary was poor. We know that she's about to walk into a season of life where she's in disrepute because she's pregnant and she's not married yet. And yet, she can look up and she can say, but God sees me and he watches over me.

And, you know, I think even if you took nothing else away from this passage or from this sermon, it would be enough just to remember today that God sees you. Because if you think about Advent, what is Advent but waiting in the midst of suffering and sin for what is promised but what has not come yet?

And what you have to believe in those kinds of seasons in life is that God sees you, that he watches over you and he has not walked away. Okay? So Mary was poor and yet what does he do?

You see in verse 53, well, not in verse 53, but he says he has exalted her. And that's what he says. He does that to the humble people. Verse 52, he brings down the mighty from their thrones and he's exalted those in humble estate.

So Mary looks at God and says, he sees me in my humility. He exalts me. And he says he does mighty things for her, which I think is a really funny way of putting this because what has God done for Mary?

[ 9 : 44 ] All he has done is put a tiny child in her womb. And yet she looks at that and she says, he has done something mighty for me. And it's because, of course, she knows that this is not just any child.

This is the Messiah. She has, God is bringing Mary's salvation through the very child that's in her womb. He is doing something mighty. And, you know, an obvious question to ask in this passage is why?

Why would God single out someone like Mary who was poor, who, you know, why would God give that child to this woman? And you can see part of the reason that Mary praises God is because that is the wonder of this passage that he would go to someone in such lowliness and give the Christ child to them.

But the one reason that you get, the one explanation you get is in verse 45. And it's when Elizabeth talks to Mary and she almost kind of explains her blessedness because she says there in verse 45, excuse me, in verse, yeah, verse 45.

Elizabeth says, and blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. It's as if Elizabeth is saying, blessed are you precisely because you are someone who when God spoke to you, you believed it and you trusted it.

[ 11 : 09 ] And, you know, just in the passage before this is when the angel comes to Mary and says, you're going to bear the Son of God. And Mary believed the angel. And in fact, the impression that you get is Mary is simply the kind of woman who listens to God and His Word and who believes what He says and puts all of her hope in that.

And the kind of belief that you see in someone like Mary, what does it mean to believe? You know, a lot of times when we talk about belief, we talk, we almost, partly because of our modern world, when we believe something, often what we mean is we say, I think that this is true.

You know, I believe in gravity. My working assumption is that gravity is a real force. The kind of belief that Mary has is not just intellectual affirmation saying this is true.

It's beyond that. It's believing in such a way that you actually begin to put your weight on the promises that God is making. and really, the only way that you can see it, one way that you can see it is by looking at its opposite.

So did you notice that Mary, not only does she praise God, but she also, she has some pretty hard words to say to some people in this passage. She talks about three kinds of people, the proud, the rich, and the wealthy.

[ 12 : 31 ] And she says, these are the kinds of people that God, you know, He exalts humble people and He humiliates. He brings low the rich, the mighty, and the proud.

And it's not because, you know, Abraham was rich and God lifted Abraham up. So the point is not to say if you are rich, God can have nothing to do with you. Mary is saying, where I have put my trust is in the promises of God.

And there are some people who put their trust in their riches or they put their trust in their might or they put their trust in pride, in their own self-confidence, in their ability to provide for themselves or in their ability to not need God.

And what Mary is saying in this passage is, and she's picking this up from the Old Testament, this idea that when you put your hope in riches, when you put your hope in might, earthly power, those things can never make you truly blessed because you can't hold on to them.

and they can't keep you safe. They can't protect you from death. They can't give you the kind of salvation that God is promising to Mary in a passage like this. She looks up at God and she says, he's used his might for me.

[ 13 : 47 ] He's given me salvation. And Mary is saying, God brings low the rich, the mighty, and the proud because they're looking for what I have found in God and they're not going to find it in anything else and they'll only be disappointed.

One way of putting it like this is like this. You cannot, Mary magnifies God. That's what she's doing in this whole passage. You cannot magnify God and be proud at the same time because being proud is saying, I am sufficient.

I have done for myself. I have provided for myself. And the more we say that, the less we're relying on God and saying, he has done this for me. You know, even if you are the most successful business person in the world, you know, if you're a Christian, you look at all of your success and you say, you know, if I have been successful through my intellect or through what I have figured out in business, it's only because God has given me those gifts.

Anything that I have used to succeed in my life is only a gift from God and therefore, I can't be proud. I can't be proud of what I have or what I've accumulated because it's God himself who has given me everything that I am.

He's given me all the blessings that I have. So the heart of blessedness, what are we trying to say here? The heart of blessedness, Mary is saying, it's not in wealth, it's not in power, it's not in self-confidence, it's in what God has done.

[ 15 : 15 ] So if you want to be truly blessed, if you want to have what Mary has where you want to sing out, Mary is saying, you've got to, if you want to find true blessings, you've got to look for it in a place, blessedness that doesn't change can only be found in a person that doesn't change.

That's what Mary is pointing out here. And so let me say this, if you are lowly this morning, if you look at your life and you say, this is not a good season of life for me, for whatever reason, because of a sin that you're struggling with or because you look around and life has just not turned out the way that you wanted to, what Mary would tell you is, if you feel lowly, you are in the perfect place to know the blessedness of God because you're looking around you and you're saying, I can't find blessedness anywhere else except for from God.

You're in the perfect place to find it. But there's also, you know, another thing we struggle with in this kind of season is we say to ourselves, I believe this message, I believe the gospel, but, and yet I don't feel blessed.

You might put it like this, I don't feel happy right now. If I were to describe my emotion in life, it's not happy. And one thing we can take away from this passage is the point is not necessarily to pursue blessedness.

It's to pursue the source of blessedness because if all you're trying to find is happiness, you'll never find it. But if you pursue the one person that provides blessedness, then you can find it.

[ 16 : 44 ] Because if you notice, think about Mary. When, have you ever noticed that when Mary, when the angel appears to Mary and he makes all these promises, her first response is not overjoyed.

It says that she was troubled if you look back in Luke. She was troubled when the angel first came to her. And even after she gets over not being troubled, there's no sense of rejoicing. All she says is, I am a servant of the Lord and I will do what he asks.

And it's not until Mary goes to Elizabeth and Mary looks, Elizabeth looks at Mary and says, Mary, you are blessed. It's not until Elizabeth calls her blessed that she seems to rejoice in the blessing itself.

And a friend pointed this out to me that stuck with me that there's a message in here about the power of community and the power of encouragement because sometimes what we need from other people is to remind ourselves that we are blessed.

And we need people, our friends, our Christian community to get us out of the funks that we're in because we forget that we are blessed. We forget what we have until someone comes and says, don't you realize that you're blessed?

[ 17 : 50 ] Don't you see what God has done for you in the past weeks and months? Okay? Okay, so the first thing you see here is what makes Mary blessed? Well, she sees that God sees her. And the second thing, she sees her life as a part of a bigger picture of God's salvation.

She sees in her life something bigger going on that God is doing. And if you read the song all at once, you know, it starts out with her talking about herself and it's all about her and God saying, God has done this for me.

He's been so gracious to me in my humble estate. And then as you read through the song, you see her horizon of vision changes and it opens up to where it goes from he's done this for me to he has done this for everyone, what is in this passage.

And Mary realizes that the real blessing here is not for her exclusively. It's for the world. Even just notice in verse 48, what does she call herself?

She calls herself a servant. He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. And then if you skip down to verse 54, she says, what has God done?

[ 19 : 05 ] He has helped his servant Israel. So at first she speaks about her being the servant. And then she says, no, he's done this for his true servant Israel, which she's just a part of.

And what Mary realizes, and this is why this passage matters to us, is because this isn't just Mary talking about her own self being blessed.

She's saying, there is a blessing that is on offer to the whole world now because of the blessing that God has given to her. Mary is someone who knew her Bible well and knew the Old Testament well.

And that meant that she was a person who was always looking at her life in the grander narrative of Scripture. She was always looking for a Messiah. And finally he comes, and it just so happened that he comes literally to her.

But really this is what matters most to her is that this is the fulfillment of God's promise to be with us all. You know, Briggs was just up here. And one of the things that he said is, unto us a child is born.

[ 20 : 11 ] Now, earlier this week, Carly and I and the family were on a road trip and we were listening to the short children's book, The Greatest Christmas Pageant Ever, which a lot of you know.

And the whole story is about how this ragtag family who knows nothing about Christmas, they try out for the local Christmas nativity scene and they get in.

And one of the children is chosen to be Mary. And there's this moment towards, in the final dress rehearsal, where they're doing all their lines and the angel comes out and looks at the shepherd and says, unto you, unto us, unto you a child is born.

And in the story, this girl who's playing Mary, but who knows nothing about the Christ story, she cries out and she says, not them, me, unto me a child is born.

I'm the one who had the baby. And the mother who's running this whole show, she stops the show and she says, no, she says, no, no, no. That just means that Jesus belongs to everybody.

[ 21 : 17 ] Unto all of us, a child is born. And, you know, it's a comical scene, but it's making a really serious theological point, which is that in a very real way, this is Mary's child, but it's not Mary's child because this is the child for all of us.

This is unto us a child is born. And Jesus makes this point later in the book of Luke. So in Luke chapter 11, there's this strange scene where someone comes up to Jesus and they're trying to praise him and they're trying to praise his mother and they say, blessed is the woman that bore you.

So they're praising Jesus by saying, blessed is the woman who bore you. How lucky she is to be your mother. And Jesus, and they're right, but Jesus doesn't respond by saying you're right.

What he says is, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. And Jesus' point is, what makes Mary special is not simply the fact that she bore Jesus in her womb.

In fact, if she did that without faith, it wouldn't have been anything. But she believed and that's where the promise was and the promise is for all of us. Blessed are we if we believe in the word of God, if we believe that Jesus Christ really has come for humanity to rescue them.

[ 22 : 36 ] Okay, so what do we do with this? We're working to a close here. Number one, Advent. Advent, what this means is that, what Mary's song means is that Advent is a message for all of us.

This is not her special secret. This is a message to the whole world that is in need of salvation, a whole world that is full of sin and sorrow and grief and suffering.

Advent, the birth of Jesus, Mary's song is a message to all of us that Jesus has come unto all of us and that He's making His promises, He's fulfilling His promises for all of us in Mary.

Okay? You know, we often go to the movies to forget about life. I did that this week. Movies make you forget about life and you love the story. But you have to know, when you read this story, you don't read it because it's a beautiful story and it helps you forget about all the struggles of December.

You read this story to remind yourself what is true. It's true that the Son of God came to Mary and the Son of God was born of a virgin. It's true.

[ 23 : 46 ] And it's true in such a way that if you can see that story as a part of your own story, it will change your life. It will change the way that you see the world and the way that you live in it. To be blessed, this is the last word here, to be blessed is to know that God is your Savior.

To be blessed is to know that God is your Savior and to see your life as a part of what He's doing. He sees you and your life is a part of what He's doing because He's come to redeem us all.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise You for the Gospel. Help us when we look to other places, to our wealth, to our money, to our pursuit of reputation.

Help us to repent in the ways that we look for blessedness outside of You. And help us, even as we come to this table, Lord's Supper, to remember what Jesus Christ has done for us, what His death has accomplished, and what He began in His incarnation at the birth.

In Your Son's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.