

# Mary's Song

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[ 0 : 00 ] I come to your word humbly and ask that you will speak to us and that as you do speak to us, that our hearts would be soft and receptive and that we will see how you want us to live in light of it and that we will be faithful to obey you in all things.

We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. Well, we live in a world that values and honours pride.

We're encouraged to be proud of ourselves, to be proud of our achievements, to be proud of our choices, to be proud of our heritage, to be proud of our country, proud of our school, proud of our successes, even sometimes proud of our mistakes and failures in a perverse way.

For our world, pride is a virtue and we're often seen as somehow deficient if we're not proud people.

The Bible has a slightly different perspective. In 1 John we read, everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life come not from the Father, but from the world.

[ 1 : 33 ] And for Mary, in the passage we had read, in verses 46 to 55 of Luke chapter 1, which I hope you have open there, pride is definitely not a virtue.

In fact, Mary seems to look at the opposite of pride, humility, as a virtue.

Now, we can be tempted to take the attitude of that comedian who, when someone was commended to her as a very humble person, sneered, well, she has a lot to be humble about.

As we value pride, we often disdain humility. And humility is often misunderstood. We recognize it as the opposite of pride, pride, and often we equate it with tearing down of ourselves, just as pride is the building up of ourselves.

So we run ourselves down and call that humility. Is humility found in phrases like, I'm no good, I'm worthless?

[ 3 : 09 ] Well, I think we'll see that it isn't. I think that we'll see that humility is something quite different. Or we can also see humility as mere lip service, a way to serve our own ends, like the fake humility of the character Uriah Heep in Charles Dickens' novel David Copperfield, where he says, I'm humble, I'm ever so humble, all the while scheming as to how he can get David's money from him, how he can cheat him.

So in both of those cases, the self-abasement, tearing ourselves down, and the fake humility, the facade, the front of humility, actually covers up a form of pride.

Because pride is that attitude and orientation that seeks to make it all about us, all about me. It's the look at me attitude.

attitude. And true humility, as is modelled by Mary in verses 46 to 49 of our passage, is very different to both of those two.

Mary's response is not to tear herself down and to say, I am nothing. Just look at the second part of verse 48. She said, from now on, all generations will call me blessed.

[ 5 : 05 ] She wasn't putting herself down here. Mary realised that what Elizabeth had said in verses 43 and 45 was indeed true.

She was to be the mother of the Lord. She was indeed blessed. And Mary's attitude is not self-serving either.

She realised that it was the Lord who had done it all for her. And we see that in verse 49. The Lord, the mighty one, has done great things for me.

holy is his name. See, that's true humility. Putting God at the centre of things, whereas pride is putting ourselves at the centre.

Humility says, holy is his name. Pride says, great is my name. God is my name. It seems to me that Mary, in this passage, had a really clear sense of who she was.

[ 6 : 34 ] She recognised that she needed a saviour. She says something incredible. she's about to give birth to Jesus and she recognises that she needs a saviour.

The saviour who was to be her own child. So she recognised firstly that she needed a saviour. She also acknowledged that she came from humble origins. she was powerless. Look at verse 48. He's been mindful, God has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. She knew that she was powerless. But she did recognise that God had done great things for her. So you have these three things. She needed a saviour. she was powerless, but God had done great things. Ironically, her sense of self, her understanding of who she was came from her sense of God.

[ 7 : 59 ] praise for God. She starts from a position of praise for God, not praise of self.

And that's the tone of the whole poem. My soul glorifies the Lord, not me. God. She knew who she was because she first knew who God is.

She didn't need to show how good she was because she knew how good God was and is.

And she also knew that she was known by God. God has seen the humble state of his servant.

Now, our world not only honors pride, but it places great emphasis on each of us individually being empowered to choose our identity.

Identity often based on gender or sexual orientation or what you do or what you're good at or all sorts of things. And declaring that it is a right that you should take that identity.

[ 9 : 33 ] Take pride in that identity. And many people hold that as the highest good, the best thing you can do. Mary stands as a godly example and demonstration of how sexual orientation, gender identity, what you do, what you study, what you're good at, aren't the central defining things of life.

God is. Knowing who we are before God gives us identity. and as we recognize who God is, we with Mary recognize that we need a savior, that we are powerless and that in the light of those things, we can see what God has done for us.

And that's what Christmas is about. God intervening, doing great things for us, sending Jesus.

Because you see, God is merciful.

That's what verse 50 says. From verse 50 on, we hear about all the great things that God has done. And verse 50 is a summary.

Even though we are sinful and in need of a savior, God is merciful. Mercy is God's nature. mercy.

[ 11 : 10 ] And that's how God has always acted towards his people. Mary recognized that now with this child that was going to be born to her, which Elizabeth had recognized as her Lord, even before the child was born, this child would be the ultimate act of God's mercy.

not just for way back then, but for generations to come, even up to now. Jesus is God being merciful.

Verses 51 to 53 describe a massive overturning of the values of the world. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm.

He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. God acts to do things with his arm, just as Psalm 98 talked about.

but he also acts in the inmost hearts of people to scatter, to bring down the proud. Politically, proud rulers are brought low, but the humble people are raised up.

[ 12 : 49 ] The rich go hungry, the poor are fed. Do you see what's happening here? The proud, the self-sufficient are shown by God to need him.

And those who know that they need him, they know that they need to rely on him, are lifted up and taken care of.

It turns out that the proud, the self-centered, the you as the center of the universe is not only against God, but it's actually going to be torn down by God.

That whole attitude is going to be shown to be corrupt and useless. Humble reliance on God is what he vindicates, what he values.

And Mary saw that and was so sure that she talks about it in the past tense as though it's already happened. Notice that he has brought down rulers and Jesus hadn't even been born yet, but it was so certain.

[ 14 : 11 ] And the reason why she could be so confident was because she recognized that this was something that God had promised many, many years ago.

As long ago as Abraham, right back, you know, remember back in, way back in Genesis, at the start of the Bible story, God promised that he was going to do all this, that he was going to change

things around.

God remembers the promises that he gives to his people. And although we're sometimes tempted to think that this Christmas stuff, all this talk is kind of old-fashioned, it happened way back then, it's out of date or past its use by date, that's not how God works, that's not how God sees it, because God plays the long game.

You may think that your 20 or 30 or even 60 years are the most important times that have ever been. and it is for you, I guess, for me.

This 60 years is all I've known, 60 plus. But God is from everlasting to everlasting. everlasting. A God centred perspective places our lives in perspective.

[ 15 : 59 ] It puts Christmas into perspective. What we are living through now is a very small part of God's big plan.

time. And that Christmas, all those years ago, was a pivotal moment, because Jesus has effect, his saving that he came to do has effect right up till today.

It's an amazing thought. And we get to celebrate that. because the message of Christmas, that God is here to save us, God is present for us, is relevant right up to today.

It's true right up to today. God is at work today, this Christmas, and his mercy to his people has been flowing down through the ages since then, even to this place this evening.

So what does this mean for us here and now? God is God is God and we are not.

[ 17 : 45 ] While this world wants to tell us that we are the captain of our own destiny, the center of our own existence, and the most important person in the world is you, we're reminded here that that's not the case.

we are called from self-centered pride to God-centered humility. And secondly, our identity isn't found in the pronouns we prefer, what gender label we place on ourselves, or what our sexual preferences are, or our identity isn't in what we do, in our job, or our area of study.

It's not in the way we play sport, or the way we can't play sport. It isn't in the things we're good at, or the things we're bad at.

Our identity comes from who we are before God, and a recognition of that. And that identity is that we all need a saviour.

We're all sinful people. We all need someone to rescue us from the consequences of our sins.

[ 19 : 14 ] And that is Jesus. And we are all powerless to do that ourselves. And the great news is that God has acted in Christ to save us.

God has acted and done great things for us, even giving us the right, the Bible says, to be called the children of God. That is identity.

the coming of Jesus is God's decisive action for us.

His Christmas gift to us, if you like. And we're called to respond to that gift by repentance, that is, turning away from our proud rebellion against God and turning to him in faith, recognizing that he is God and we are not.

Mary said, my soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

[ 20 : 48 ] That was Mary's testimony. May it also be ours, this Christmas and always. Let's pray.

Lord God, our heavenly father, we, when we consider who you are, we are humbled. Help us to be people who put you at the center, turn to you in repentance and faith, turning away from our proud self-sufficiency and realizing that we need you and we need what you have done for us in Jesus.

We pray all this in his name. Amen. Amen. all this in his