

Mary's Song (2)

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Let's turn again this evening to the Gospel of Luke and chapter 1. We're going to look at the passage we looked at this morning, following on from what we saw this morning in Luke chapter 1 and verse 46.

This song of Mary, where Mary said, 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 empty away. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever. The two things we looked at this morning were how in this praise that Mary is involved in and gives to God, we can find her active in praising the Lord.

We saw a number of things in relation to praise itself, and how important praise is in our experience, that it is something that brings us to focus upon God himself.

And secondly, we noted how Mary presented God in her praise. This song is not about herself. This song of praise is not about Mary herself in particular, though she mentions herself in it.

[1 : 50] It's about God. It's about God. It's about what God has done, what God is doing, what God will yet do. And that's the theme that continues throughout this passage as we move on from verses 46 to 48 that we looked at this morning.

And there are five elements, or five attributes, you might say, five characteristics of God, and of how God works, and of what God does, that Mary speaks about in her song of praise.

And that's what we're going to focus on, just very simply and very quickly go over these five points that are so important for our understanding of God, and that enter into our praise of God as well.

Because our praise of God is really lacking something very fundamental if it lacks these five references to God and his attributes, if we don't express thankfulness and praise over these five attributes of God.

That he is a mighty God, that he is the holy God, that he is the merciful God, that he is the consistent God, and that he is the covenant God. And in all five of these elements, God is presented by Mary as she refers to these things as they are true about God in her experience.

[3 : 15] And remember from this morning that we saw how important our experience of God is, that our praise of God is not just something formal that has a formal outward shape to it, but that our experience is something that comes forth, or our praise rather, is something that comes forth from our inner experience, from deep within our soul or spirit, as Mary puts it.

We have this praise of God that flows out towards God and ascends to God. So our experience cannot be detached from our praise, and praise really essentially is an expression to God from a saving experience of God, where we have that in our heart, where we know that in our lives, which is what's pressed into these words in verse 47.

My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, my Savior God, as she puts it, is how she knows him.

So let's look at these five distinctives or five elements that distinguish God or characterize God for us. In verse 49, you find him described as one who is mighty.

Mary is praising the mighty God. The angel's words in verse 35 are significant in that regard too.

[4 : 42] The angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God.

She came to have this child in her womb by the power of God overshadowing her, not by a human act, but by the power of God himself, thereby ensuring the sinlessness of this child.

And it's the power of God that Mary praises, because she has come to realize in the song of praise that only by the power of God could such a stupendous thing as this great fact have come about.

Now the Bible tells us that the power of God is seen through his actions in creation. We did not see God creating the universe as we know it, and creating ourselves as humankind or mankind as part of that creation or that universe.

But the Bible tells us that. And again, we come back to this great need to believe the Bible's accuracy and reliability as God's truth to us.

[5 : 59] If we take those elements out of the Bible that don't actually fit with our own particular way of thinking or was the way of thinking of our particular age, then you see you don't really have something reliable.

It's something that's malleable, something that you're able to adjust as one generation follows another. And therefore you can't build upon it, and you can't rely upon it, and you can't build your life, and you can't prepare for eternity on the basis of it.

But when you take it as a word that has come to be breathed out by God over the centuries, and has come together by his own ingenuity as a word that's reliable, then in that reliable word you find teaching about how the universe came into being.

And it didn't produce itself. And it didn't come from simple beginnings into the complex thing that it now is, nor did human life within it.

Let me just remind you of how Paul wrote to the Romans in that great epistle to the Romans, and how in the early part of Romans it's quite clearly stated in regard to the universe as we see it, or the creation, as Christians as we call it, the creation.

[7 : 20] In Romans chapter 1 and verses 19 and 20, this is what Paul said, for what can be known about God. Now he's talking here about people who don't accept the teaching of God, who don't accept even what their conscience tells them about the existence of God.

But this is what Paul is saying. What can be known about God is plain to them. It's not that they're ignorant about God. It's not that they know nothing at all about God.

It's that what they know about God is dismissed by them. This is what he says. What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal and divine nature, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived.

Now remember he's talking there mostly about pagan people in his own day who rejected the evidence in creation as testimony to the existence of the God that is in the Christian gospel.

[8 : 27] These things, he says, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

That's a remarkable statement. And one that you've got to keep coming back to in our own day and generation as well. When you find people saying there's no evidence for God. There's no evidence that God exists.

Well, if you were to ask the apostle Paul, Paul, do you really have evidence for the God that you're proclaiming in the gospel? Where is the evidence that God exists? And Paul would point to the universe and say, evidence, there's the evidence.

If your mind is willing to accept it, if your mind is open to accept it, if you have a mind to actually let into your heart the fact that that creation speaks about a creator, and not just in a general way, but it says, his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

Now then you come to what Mary is saying here, and you come to the child in her womb, and you come to her praise of God, for he who is mighty has done great things for me.

[9 : 49] It is his mightiness, it is his power, as it was seen in the creation around us, that Mary is talking about, in the creation of this child within her womb.

He who is mighty has done it. The creator has done it. And you know, when you look around you, and see, and take into your mind as you can, the fact that all of that speaks about a creator, that God brought into being, all of that which exists, by the word of his power, as you believe from the Bible, then you come to the song of Mary, and you realize, you begin to realize that, in all God's works of creation, there is nothing more remarkable, perhaps you should say, there is nothing quite as remarkable, as the creation, of a human body for himself, in the person of his son, in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Where is there, any aspect of creation, of God creating, of God by his power, bringing something into being, where is there anything as remarkable, as the creation of a body, for the second person

of the Trinity, for God in the person of his son.

Because what's happening there, is quite astounding. It's not just, a human being, that Mary is carrying in her womb.

It's the humanity of her Lord. It's the human nature, that God has brought, to be joined to his own human nature, in the person of Jesus Christ, his son.

[11 : 41] It's a human nature, that doesn't have, independence in itself, from the divine person, of the son of God. And that's, as remarkable a thing, as you can think of.

That the son of God, took a human nature, joined it to himself, and is joined to that human nature, so that he is God and man, in the one person forevermore.

That's what Mary, is actually speaking of. That's the power, that's the almightiness, that has created this child, within her that she's carrying.

And will, in a few months from, when she's speaking here, bring that child, into the world. And if you ask, what is the meaning, of Christmas, if we use, as we do the word, Christmas, so commonly, this is what Christmas, is about.

Not that it's just, at Christmas time, we emphasize that, so often, of course, it's something that's true, for Christians, all of the time. This is what Christmas, this is what Christmas, is about too though.

[12 : 54] It's about God, coming into this world. It's about God, taking to himself, our human nature, and indeed, our human condition, because he came into this world, to live in this world.

He came into this world, to minister in this world. He came into this world, to suffer in this world. He came into this world, to be tempted, in the person of Jesus, as he was, as we read from the Bible.

He came into this world, to die, the death of the cross, in the person of the Lord incarnate. He came, to be raised, from the dead, in triumph over death.

The mighty God. God. That's what Christmas means. That's God's great gift. That's what you unwrap, when you receive Christ, as your Savior.

That's why Mary, is so exultant, and so filled, with praise, and rejoicing, at this God, who is, entering into human, conditions, and experience, in the person, of his son.

[14 : 00] She's saying, the one, who is mighty, has done great things, for me. And secondly, and holy, is his name. Now we've often, come across the way, in which the Bible speaks, about the name, of God.

We're not talking, there about any, particular word, as such, that's used, to describe God. The word God, itself, the word Lord, all of these, and other terms, are used, to describe God.

That's how he's revealed himself, to us. But when, the Bible simply says, his name, as it is here, it really means, for us, in his revelation, of himself, how his nature, or how his character, has come to be revealed, in his name.

You see, the Bible so often, speaks about, God, in terms, that fit in, with, what we ourselves, need to experience, or need to receive, from God.

For example, in passages, that deal with, knowing the peace of God, God is spoken of as, the God of peace. In other words, it's part of the name, of God.

[15 : 08] It's part of what God is. It's part of his great character, or his nature, as he brings himself, to us, and reveals things, about himself, that are true. His name, is revealed.

That's his name. And what Mary is saying is, his name, is holy. Everything in that, revelation of God, everything that he has revealed, of himself to us, is holy.

And if you ask, what does that mean? What does it mean, that God is holy? What is the meaning of holy? What is the meaning, of holiness? Yes. You're asking a very difficult question.

Although it's revealed, it doesn't mean it's, easy to define, easy to actually, communicate, easy to, speak about, or easy to, unpack all the, the inner, aspects of that word, holy.

But it does mean, that God, is entirely, separate from us, in his, sinless, perfection. God's holiness, has to do with, the perfection, of his being.

[16 : 24] That it is, completely free, of any defect. As John put it, in his first epistle, there, that God is, light, and in him, is no darkness, at all.

Now he's not talking about, ordinary darkness, and ordinary, natural, light. He's talking there, about something moral, something spiritual. There is nothing in God, of any moral darkness.

There's not a speck, not the least speck, in God, of anything to do, with defect, or sin, in anything that God, thinks, anything God does, anything God says.

And of course, that's something, that you have to say, was revealed, in Jesus Christ as well. Many, many people, the Bible tells us, tried to find, fault with Jesus.

And couldn't establish, any fault, whatsoever against him. He never did sin. Imagine, being brought up, in a home, in a family, where you have, someone in that family, that is never, ever, doing anything wrong, that never, says a wrong word, that never, shows any sign, of any, failure, whatsoever, in a moral sense.

[17 : 36] But that's, so it would be, in the home, of Mary, and Joseph. And you can just, imagine them, as they looked, on this child, that Mary, had brought, into the world.

As they cared, for him, as parents. Just imagine, what they must have, felt like, when they saw, this child, growing up, without a fault, at all, in him.

Never saying, a wrong word. Always, glorifying God. That's the, perfection, of being.

That reflects, and is, in fact, the being, of God himself, there in our nature, in Jesus Christ, is revealed, to us, what God himself, is, and has been, and will be, from all eternity, that he is, holy. He is, entirely, opposite, to what we are, as sinners. He is, entirely, other, distant, separate, from us, in his holiness. And holiness, is something, that when people, come to realize it, in different, different, episodes, in the Bible, you think of, the likes of Peter, for example, when he was out fishing, and, they caught nothing, all night, and the Lord, Jesus Christ, appeared to them, Jesus came, and told them, to go out again, into the deep, and launch their, launch out, and let down, their nets again, and Peter, of course, being Peter, said, well Lord, we've, we've been toiling, all night, and we've, caught nothing, but, because you've said it, at your word, I will let down, we'll let down the nets, and of course, they caught so many fish, that they were hardly, able to drag, the net, with the fish, in the catch, that they had, that they had caught, and Peter, was astounded, Peter, was confronted there, not just with, an almighty power, with something that, in terms of its, its sheer, almightiness, and control, of nature, he couldn't understand, what really, got to Peter, was the holiness, of Christ, depart from me, oh Lord, for I am a sinful man, he didn't say, depart from me Lord, for I am, for I am a small man, he didn't really say,

[20 : 02] Lord I feel, my smallness, I feel my, my finiteness, I feel, my humanness, in your presence, what he really felt, was his sin, what he really felt, was the awesome, holiness, of Christ, we felt, anything of that, touch our souls, how often, have we come, into the presence, of Christ, and left the presence, of Christ, when we've been praying, or gathered together, like this, and worship together, as a congregation, how often have you, and I come, whether it's in preaching, or in hearing, whatever participation, we've had, in church services, how often have we come, and left this place, saying, our Lord, is holy, we should do, because that's what he is, always, perfectly, absolutely, totally, unchangeably, and that's why, the Bible speaks, of God's, relation to, things like sin, and his own glory, and our access, to him, as we come to him, in terms of his holiness, we worship him, as the holy God, we have to worship him, in the beauty, of holiness, we come to draw near, to him, and we cannot, draw near, to him, as we are in ourselves, because God is holy, and we need the provision, that he has made for us, and that's the wonder, of the provision, that in Jesus Christ, he has opened up, the way for us, in him, we are able to approach him, who is holy, in Jesus Christ,

God accepts, our approach, and our persons, because we are covered, with the righteousness, the holiness, the perfection, of Christ himself, his name, is holy, we should live, every day, with some degree, of consciousness, that we are living, in the presence, and under the eye, of this holy God, and you know, the more we know, of that, in our lives, the more we are conscious, that we live, under the gaze, of this holy God, the bigger, an impact, it will have, on our lives, it won't keep us, away from church, it will make sure, that we come more often, to church, it won't actually, keep us away, from worshipping God, privately, or from prayer, or from reading our Bibles, it will actually, have the opposite effect, because when you see, God and his holiness, awesome as it is, wondrous though it is, still in your heart, you come to realize, this God is worthy, of my praise, he's worthy, that I should magnify, his name, he's worthy, that I should give him, as much as I can, of worship, and of praise, and of adoration, because of who he is, and because of what he is, in his holiness, and of course, you could widen that out, though we're not going to, this evening, to take in, what the Bible teaches, about the holiness, of God's people, that that's what God, is doing, in the lives, of all that he saves, all who have come, to know him, in Christ, he's making them holy,

I know we don't, ourselves, show that holiness, as much as we should, and I know our lives, my life, and your life, is imperfect, none of us, would stand up today, and really say, with any confidence,

am I a holy person, of course not, but that's what God, is set on, that's what God, himself, is committed to doing, to make you, I think it was, McChain, who used this, great phrase, in prayer, it's a wonderful phrase, it's a wonderful, set of words, Lord, he said, make me, as holy, as it is possible, for us, for a pardoned, sinner, to be made, and that's what God, is committed to, he's committed, to making, pardoned, sinners, as holy, as he can make them, because they are going to be, in the image of Christ, they're going to be like him, and they're going to be, in glory with God, perfect reflectors, of his holiness, his name, she said, is holy, he was mighty, has done great things for me, and holy, is his name, and yes,

Christmas is about joy, and there's nothing wrong, with joy, at this or any other, time of year, yes, Christmas, is about having a good time, with friends, and enjoying people's, company, and having things, in families together, at a time, when we can be on holiday, and give more time, to being together, as families, or whatever, we have, at this time, of year, but remember, always friends, Christmas is about holiness, and that doesn't, spoil your fun, you see, it doesn't, interfere, with your sense, of rejoicing, nowhere in the Bible, do you place holiness, and do you find holiness, and rejoicing, placed as opposites, as enemies, as things in conflict, with one another, they're actually, the best of friends, the happiest people, are the holiest people, they're the ones, who know God, most closely, and the more closely, you know God, the happier, you will be in yourself, the more, you will be content, with God, as your savior, with God's provision, for you, as your redeemer, with the prospect, of being forever, with God, whatever this world, throws at you, there you see, is the Bible's teaching, there is God's, set, of characteristics, not only about himself, but about ourselves, that we need to keep together, holiness, rejoicing, joy, contentment, satisfaction, they're all part of the same family, of God's blessing, his name, is holy, and thirdly, he is the merciful God, holy is his name, and his mercy, is for those, who fear him, from generation, to generation, salvation, now mercy,

God's mercy, as indeed, human mercy, as it's patterned, upon God's mercy, it presupposes something, in other words, you can't really understand, mercy, without getting to, its background, in misery, the misery, in which, God's mercy, finds us, the misery, as we know it, from, not just the Bible's teaching, but from our own experience, the misery, of being out of communion, with God, the misery, of knowing, that God is not, our friend, until we come, to close in, with Christ, the misery, of our sinfulness, the misery, of having guilt, in the presence, and in the eye, of God, the misery, of sin, as God, as describes it for us, in the Bible, well, mercy has, our misery, as its background, and mercy, is God, looking upon us, in that misery, and having pity, for us, extending, mercy, toward us, in fact, the word literally means, in the New Testament, it literally means, giving alms, to a beggar, something you drop, into, a beggar's cap, which is sadly, so often the case, if you go through, some of the great cities, especially of, of our nation, you go through Edinburgh, or Glasgow, wherever, and maybe other places, as well, and it's not absent, from our own communities, either, people who are homeless, people who have fallen, on hard times, for whatever reason, and you find them, there sitting, in shop entrances, with something, in front of them, a tin, or a cap, or something, hoping somebody, will put some, money into it, well, mercy, is God, actually looking, in pity, so to give you, alms, to give you something, to meet your misery, except, it's not like, you do when you put something, into a beggar's cap, you don't change, that person's homelessness, you don't change, that person's situation, you don't change, that person's misery, just by putting something, in their cap, because, for one thing, sadly, what many of them, will do, will misspend that, whether it's, in drug addiction, or whatever, we're not taking, anything to do with that, at the moment, we still pity them, we still pray for them, but you see,

[29 : 27] God, finds us, in our homelessness, spiritual homelessness, we don't have a home, until we come, to know Christ, because this world, can't be our home, and heaven, is not our home, until we are safe, in Jesus, and so God, finds us homeless, and in our misery, and his mercy, toward us, his pity, directed toward us, he doesn't just, throw something at us, and say, look I've had pity on you, I've seen you, in your misery, so here I am, I'm going to provide, something for you, go and do something, about it, what does he do, he comes down, into our situation, that's what he's done, in Jesus Christ, he takes hold, of us in our condition, and as he comes, with this power, in the Holy Spirit, to take hold, of your life, he's dealing with you, as a homeless, miserable person, and he's actually, lifting you out of that, he doesn't just, walk by you, and throw something at you, he says, you come with me, and I'm going to give you, a place, in my family, and you're going, to live in my home, and I'm going, to take care of you, and you're going, to be my child, and I'm going, to adopt you, and I'm going, to call you, by my name, that's mercy, that's God's mercy, at work, that's God's,

am's giving, at work, taking hold, of our lives, as miserable sinners, as needy sinners, reaching down, into our lost condition, taking hold, of our lives, individually, personally, and pulling us, up from the dunghill, of our sin, which is how, the psalmist, celebrated the great fact, of God, and his, his work, of grace, towards, us, as lost sinners, when he changes, circumstances, to, such a degree, that he lifts, the beggar, from his dunghill, and makes them, to sit, with the princes, of his people, nothing less, will do for God, you can imagine, all of this world, and all the efforts, that are made, by organizations, like Bethany, and other individual people, and other organizations, to deal with the problem, of homelessness, and to set up shelters, and to set up, night shelters, and homes, in which people, are cared for, and rehabilitated, and that is so good, and so great, and so worthy, of our support, but what God does, is so much greater, because God, takes us home, to live with himself, can you imagine, walking past, these people, on the street, and saying to them, look, your misery, is now at an end, because I'm going, to take care of you, in fact,

I'm going to take you home, and you're going, to live with me, and you'll have, a comfortable bed, and I will provide, for you, and I'll adopt you, into my family, and I'll give you, my inheritance, and you can have, all of that, after I'm gone, and you can then, look, to have it, for yourself, well that's, what God does, that's what Christmas, is about, and we remember, the homeless, at Christmas, just not just, because there are, homeless people, that need, to be remembered, we need to remember, the homeless, of course, but it reminds us, of why the Lord, came into the world, and how the Lord, came into the world, isn't it, this Jesus, as he grew up, and became, a man, and began his ministry, who said, the birds of the air, have nests, the foxes, have holes, but the son of man, does not have a place, in which to lay his head, what is the Lord, talking about, what was Jesus, saying about himself, he was saying, in this world,

I am homeless, I've made myself, homeless, I've put myself, among the deprived, and my mercy, for my people, we speak about, homelessness, the scandal, of homelessness, the challenge, of homelessness, and it is all of that, to us as a society, but there is no, homelessness, anywhere, to be compared, with the homelessness, of Calvary, my God, my God, why have you, forsaken me, who is it, who is that, homeless person, who is that man, saying, even God, has forsaken him, it is the son of God, the son of Mary, it is the one, this servant, humble woman, brought into the world, it is the one, that she describes, as the one, whose mercy, is for those, who fear him, the mercy of God, the mercy of Christ, the mercy, we don't deserve, but that is there, in abundance for us, as God, has displayed it for us, as God, has exercised it, in Christ, as God comes, in the gospel, to tell us, you are a sinner, you need me, and I have mercy, for you,

I pity you, I want you, to live with me, I want you, to experience, what is like, to be part, of my family, to share, my inheritance, with my people, he is the consistent God, firstly, I'm just going to, run over that, because we looked at it, pretty much this morning, God does not act, in the way that, human expectations, or values, or human priorities, would expect, he talks here about, how he deals with, the poor, and the humble, and the hungry, in contrast with, the proud, and the mighty, and the rich, and if you can, think of it this way, the proud, and the mighty, and the rich, throughout the song, they really refer to, those who, are self-sufficient, as they see it themselves, though, especially, those who are, ungodly, or living in opposition, to God, those in other words, who came, to reject Christ, who could not see, that he was, at all, relevant to them, and so it is still, whereas the poor, and the humble, and the hungry, as he describes them, there,

God has, sent the rich, these proud rich, empty away, and yet, he has filled, the hungry, the poor, the humble, with good things, it's a reminder, a powerful reminder, to us, of how, dependent, we should be, actively, upon God, it's very difficult, in the kind of society, we live in, and especially, the kind of conditions, all of us here, live in, with the plenty, that we're so used to, with our homes, filled with all, of the things, that, that, have been provided, for us, in the material, plenty of our age, but that should not, in any way, interfere, with our humble, dependence, upon God, for the things, of tomorrow, and especially, for the things, of eternity, which are so much, more important, a man's life, does not consist, said Jesus, in the abundance, of the things, that he possesses, seek first, the kingdom, of God, and fifthly, he is the covenant,

[37 : 28] God, where he says here, at the end of her song, he has helped, his servant Israel, in remembrance, of his mercy, as he spoke, to our father, to Abraham, and to his offspring, forever, God's remembrance, is always to do, with God, bringing his promises, into fruition, or fulfillment, God promised, a savior, and he was true, to his promise, and Mary, is singing in praise, or expressing, in her praise, the fact, that God, has fulfilled, his promise now, and she, he has chosen

her, to be the one, in whom this promise, of a coming savior, has been fulfilled, this is, she said, what he spoke, to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring, forever, and so it is, with ourselves too, as we live, our lives, it is living, surely, in dependence, on the promises, of God,

Paul was, at one time, very concerned, to make it known, to the Corinthians, that despite, all the opposition, there was, to his gospel, to his living, by the gospel, they should, nevertheless, remember, that the gospel, was where, God's fulfilled, promises, were spoken about, and this is, what he said, in second Corinthians, chapter one, verses 19, and 20, where he said, the son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed, among you, was not yes, and no, but in him, it is always yes, for all the promises, of God, find their yes, in him, that is why, it is through him, that we utter, our amen, to God, for his glory, amen, really means, yes, that's what you say, tonight, to Jesus, our savior, and to God, who sent his son, into the world, yes, you've done it, you've fulfilled, your promise, you've shown again, and certified, your truthfulness, and now Lord, let me live, by that yes, let every day, before me, a day, when this Jesus, is one, in whom I say, my amen, to God, and living, in dependence, on him, it's not yes, and no, it's not maybe, it's yes, because that is, what God is, in Jesus, his son, that's what Christmas means, it's God's, and the church's, great, yes, let's pray,

Lord, our God, help us, as we confess, how far short, we come, in giving you, the praise, that is due to you, and how far short, we come, in living in, the dependence, we ought to have, upon you, day by day, forgive us Lord, we pray, for those failures, and help us, as we turn, to think upon, what you have provided, in the Lord, Jesus Christ for us, how positive, and how full, and how truthful, you are, how you have fulfilled, your promises in him, how all the promises of God, find their yes, in him, may we also Lord, find, that you are sufficient, for us, in all our concerns, in all our need, present, past, and future, bless us we pray, bless us in fellowship, now, and bless the food, prepared for us, and the hands that have, prepared it for us, and help us, to know your presence, among us, for Jesus sake,
Amen.