

Magnifying the Lord - A Song of Blessing, Wonder and Mercy

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Date: 15 December 2024

Preacher: Rev Gordon Matheson

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship tonight singing to God's praise in Psalm 47.! This is in Sing Psalms, page 62 of the Blue Book.! We're singing to the tune Warrington.

We'll stand and sing the whole of the psalm to God's praise.

We'll sing the song.

We'll sing the song.

We'll sing the song.

[2 : 30] We'll sing the song. We'll sing the song. We'll sing the song. We'll sing the song. We'll sing the song. We'll sing the song.

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We'll sing the song.

our heads in prayer to God. Heavenly Father, we seek this evening to come into your presence with the words of this psalm guiding our hearts. May all the nations, we pray, clap their hands and shout and let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord Most High, great King who rules the earth throughout.

[3 : 58] And we pray, Father, that tonight you would fill us with a sense of wonder and awe at how great and majestic and awesome a God you are. Help us to see you in your vast splendor. Help us to see the magnificence of your glory, to see the wonder of the incarnation, the coming of the Messiah that first time. Help us to marvel and wonder at the amazement of it all, that the one who created the heavens and the earth was placed in the womb of the Virgin and was born in such a humbly state.

And who came ultimately to endure even greater humiliation than that. Who was subjected ultimately to the cross. And who took the place of us in our sin and in our guilt before you. And has borne our guilt and our transgressions. And has made peace with almighty God.

May we tonight, therefore, be filled with awe and wonder. May we pray, Father, that you have gathered us this evening to hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus.

That you have gathered us to lift up your holy name. And may we exalt you and bless you as we look to his second coming.

Father, help us, Lord, always to remember that the Lord's day, it is a day when we remember the finished work of the cross. But we look forward to the fullness of the resurrection as well.

[5 : 54] And so, Father, may our experience this evening be one that has that forward-looking faith to the day of Christ's return. Fill us, therefore, with a sense of your great power.

That sense of your wonder and awe. That such great things lie in store for your people. The dead being raised. The new heavens and the new earth.

And the dwelling of God. The eternal Emmanuel. God dwelling among his people. In a renewed world. Hear us, then, as we sing your praises.

May we glorify your name. Hear us as we confess our sins. We acknowledge, Lord, before you. Our indebtedness. And so, hear our thanks.

And help us. Tonight, as we seek to proclaim the good news. May you open hearts in this place.

And lead us to yourself. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

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

Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked on the humbly state 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. For he has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

[14 : 26] He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever.

Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her own home. Amen. This is God's word to us.

Now let's again bow our heads in prayer to God. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you in prayer this night, we long, O Lord, to be so confident in prayer that we would not come to you with small or a narrow vision of your ability and your power.

That we would not come to you with a tiny vision of what it is that we might ask for. But that we would be bold in our prayers. That we would be confident in bringing the great things of our lives into the presence of the King.

[15 : 33] We know we have that confidence because the King is our Father. And we're called upon in Scripture that Jesus taught us to pray this way to our Father in Heaven. And so we thank you that tonight that is the privilege that we enjoy.

And so therefore give us, Father, that great boldness of children coming to one who is all-powerful. And with the most outrageous, ridiculous even expectations of what can be done.

Because you are a God who is mighty in every respect. And who knows no bounds on what he can do for his children. We thank you tonight for the promise of the faithfulness of Jesus.

The faithfulness of his coming. An answer to the promises given beforehand. And for the faithfulness of Jesus in promising to return. Because we know that that experience of the first coming, of the incarnation, brings us to that confidence in his second coming as well.

We thank you for the miracles that bookend the life of Jesus. And we ask and pray, Father, that tonight we would therefore be full of confidence in the faith that we are called to.

[16 : 43] I pray, therefore, tonight for those who are struggling with doubt. Who are desperate for assurance. Who are longing to see something that will satisfy them.

And satisfy the doubts that have been perhaps sown in their hearts over many, many years. I pray, Father, that as we consider the wonder of the virgin birth. As we consider the miracle of the resurrection.

That we would remember there is no one quite like Jesus. There is no one who came in the same way. There is no one who has departed in the same way. And therefore, we can have that full expectation of his return.

We pray tonight, Father, for those who are going through times of sorrow and grief. Those who are struggling through bitter experiences in God's providence just now. Help us to remember, Lord, that you're a loving God.

Help us to remember that you are an awesome God. And that your ways are not our ways. And although there are times that come into our experience that stagger and perplex us.

[17 : 45] We remember, Lord, that your purposes are eternal. That you have seen the end from the beginning. Because you are the author of all things. And that we, the creatures of your hand.

The ones who depend on you for life itself. And for every blessing along the way. Help us to remember that your purposes are for our good. That the promises of God and the purposes of God are for the blessing of his people.

And that they are found secure in Christ Jesus. And so, Father, even when it is times of great sorrow that have afflicted us. Even when it is times of great uncertainty that lie before us.

Help us to see Jesus in the midst of these trials. To remember that he is with us. A great high priest who has been tempted in all points as we are. Who has experienced the testing of the evil one

coming to him.

And plaguing him. With sowing him, Lord. With these same doubts and uncertainties and fears that we might have. And yet he responded to all of this. With humility and grace.

[18 : 51] Reliant on the word of God. And the promises that he held on to. Help us to come to him. In the midst of all of our sorrows and griefs.

And to remember that he is sufficient. To help us in these days. We pray for this church. And we pray for our congregation tonight. We ask that you would bless us and help us.

In these days. We see, Lord, around us. A community. In desperate need of the gospel. We see that echoed so often, Lord, in our own families. We see, Lord, in the need for the good news and the hope of Jesus to come into people's lives.

We see so many lost in their sin. Filled with carelessness around their eternal destiny. And we long, Lord, that you would remember us in these days.

That you would be gracious in reviving your church. Filling us with confidence of the gospel itself. And boldness of how we can share that good news in and through our lives. We pray for the witness, therefore, of our church.

[19 : 58] We pray that you would help us and strengthen us. To be courageous in making Jesus known. We want to pray for the ministry of this congregation. We pray for Calamurdo and ask that you would bless him.

We pray, Father, for his family. That you would secure them. That you would guard them. That you would set your spirit upon them. We ask and pray, Father, for Colin as our inter-moderator. That you would bless and protect him as well.

We long, Lord, for a ministry to be raised up in this place. We pray, Father, that you would guide us as a congregation in unity. That you would help us to seek the things that you want for us.

It's so easy for us, Lord, always to come with agendas and come with our own desires. Help us, Lord, to have the humility to hear your voice. To listen to what you are saying.

For the good and the blessing of this congregation. For the blessing of this town and these islands. We ask and pray, Father, therefore, that you would guide us in the coming weeks.

[20 : 59] That you would give us a sense of unity and purpose in this process. We pray tonight, Father, for our church nationally. We know, Lord, there are many vacancies.

As we think on our own island, Lord. We know there are six vacancies in our own presbytery. Many more besides. We pray, Father, that you would raise up workers to go into the great harvest field of the gospel.

Scotland needs preachers like never before. And so we cry to you, Father. And we pray that you would raise up preachers and pastors who will shepherd the flock of God.

Who will lead the evangelistic witness and outreach of the church. Who will pastor sensitively and wisely in what are incredibly complex days.

In that complexity, Lord, we pray especially for those who are most vulnerable in this day. We pray for our young people. Surrounded as they are with competing ideologies and world views that are at odds with what you have told us in scripture.

[21 : 59] And we pray for all those who are seeking to shape the hearts and the minds of young people in our church. And we pray above all for parents. But also for the Sunday school teachers, for the youth clubs, for the different folk who are committed to helping and blessing the young in our church in these days.

In all the excitement, Lord, of church camps announcements this last week. We pray for those who will be going off to camps in the summer. We pray, Lord, for that wonderful work of the church camps. Bringing together, so often in that week, all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzles of people's lives.

And showing Christ within all of that. And we pray your blessing on those who will be preparing even now to lead these camps in the summer months. We ask and pray your blessing on the work of our church and its church plants.

And in its church revitalizations. We pray for Ivor MacDonald and the Centre for Rural Ministry over in Skye. And we ask that you would prosper that work. That the blessing of it would flow to these rural parts of our country where the needs are great.

Where the church so often does feel weak and vulnerable. And may you set, Father, your spirit upon that work and richly bless it. We pray tonight, Lord, for the cause of the gospel to the ends of

the earth.

[23 : 15] We remember, Lord, we can't turn on our news just now without seeing that unfolding, rapidly unfolding picture in countries like Syria.

Where events seem to happen so quickly. And we can feel unsettled because of it. And yet, you are the one who rules and governs the events of this world.

You are the one who sets the course of events. And give us that settled sense, therefore, of peace.

That you are in control. That your purposes are being worked out.

And that ultimately, the glory of God will be revealed in all of these things. We pray, therefore, for peace. We pray for the gospel of peace.

We pray for the people of the gospel of peace. That we would be peacemakers in a broken world.

And that we would know the blessing that belongs to peacemakers.

[24 : 12] Help us, therefore, Father, to be your people. Bold in a broken world. And filled, therefore, with grace. For the task at hand.

We ask your help in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing once more to God's praise. This time from Psalm 9b. This is, again, Sing Psalms.

Sorry, page 10 of the psalm book. We're going to sing to the tune, Centennial. We'll sing verses 7 to 14.

So four stanzas. The Lord sits forever as king on his throne. His rule is established for justice alone.

He judges the world. He does what is right. He governs the nations with justice and might.

We'll sing, then, these verses from verse 7 to verse 14 to God's praise. We'll stand to sing. The Lord sits forever as king on his throne.

[25 : 22] His rule is accomplished for justice alone. He judges the world.

He does what is right. He governs the nations with justice and might.

The Lord is a stronghold in times of distress. A refuge for those who the wicked or blessed.

Your people who know you will trust in your grace. You've never forsaken those who the wicked or blessed.

You've never forsaken those who see in your face. The Lord is a stronghold. The Lord is a stronghold.

[26 : 30] O claim to the nations the deeds he has done. The cry of the faith did once rage in his ear.

The Lord is a stronghold. The Lord is a stronghold.

See what I suffer from malice and gate. Have pity and lift me away from death's gate.

Have pity and lift me away from death's gate.

Well, please turn with me in your Bibles back to that passage we've read, to Luke chapter 1. We're going to read again verses 46 through to 55.

[27 : 55] 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. 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. Amen.

[28 : 51] This is God's word. Let's bow in prayer before we turn to the word. Father, help us this evening as we turn to this wonderful song of praise. Help us to remember that your actions are good.

That your actions were good in bringing Jesus into the world. Your actions were good in the salvation that he brought. And your actions tonight remain good in leaving us as the heralds of that good news.

Therefore, we pray that we would understand our role in the work of the gospel. And that you would encourage us as we reflect on the coming of the Christ.

That we would echo all of the words of Mary. Be able to sing them in our experience. We pray therefore, Father, that you would tonight guide us and direct us.

To have sure footing in a changing world. That we would know your blessing. That we would have a sense of wonder at your magnificence.

[30 : 12] That we would understand the call of God therefore on our lives. Help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. I wonder if any of you remember in school or perhaps university or higher education ever.

I use the word playing. They're not really toys but playing with a microscope. It's a great experience putting a leaf under a microscope and looking at the intricate detail blown up.

So that you can see it through a little eyepiece. Or perhaps you might have had the privilege of using a telescope at some point. Maybe you're somebody who loves to look through a telescope out into the stars in the heavens.

And you see these magnificent things. Maybe like Galileo. You've looked through a telescope and you've seen the moons of Jupiter. And you've thought, wow.

The world revolves around the sun. Not the other way around. Maybe that's not the very thought process you've had. But it certainly blows your mind when you see either intricate details brought up large.

[31 : 37] Or the vastness of what's going on out in the cosmos. Brought down small enough so that you can see the detail of it. In a sense almost see the big picture all of a sudden.

And have it magnified in your sight. To magnify something, that's what it means. It means taking a sight that would be too small to see perhaps.

But to make much of it for the benefit of others to view as well. That's what a magnifying glass does. It magnifies something small.

And the glasses that are inside a telescope and the lenses that are in there. They do that same work of taking something that's too small for the naked eye to see. But blowing it up for our vision. And seeing the wonder of it. And Mary, in this song, it's called the Magnificat. She magnifies the Lord.

[32 : 37] It's a strange thing that, isn't it? You know, we think of the Lord. We think of him as God. The creator of the entire cosmos. Why does he need magnifying? What is there about God that needs to be magnified?

Surely, those of us who are believers especially, we fall into thinking this very easily. Surely, the world can see him. Surely, the world can see his handiworks in the works of creation.

Or see it in the intricacy of the cells in each one of our bodies. And the DNA that runs through us. Surely, the magnificence of God can be seen. And then we think, well, in the Bible, we think at this time of year, everyone is aware of Christmas.

And what Christmas is all about. About the coming of Jesus. Of the Messiah coming into the world. That Savior born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem's stable.

Surely, people will see. Surely, that is what's visible. And sadly, we know that that is not the case.

[33 : 51] If people have their eye to a telescope, it's certainly not looking at Christ. The vision that people want to have these days is away from him.

And the devil has done a wonderful job of distracting people from the truth. And it therefore falls to the church.

It falls to us. In our time. To magnify the Lord for them. For us to be magnifying glasses that will show them Jesus.

And this is what Mary is seeking to do. To make much of what God has done in her experience.

And so she takes us through at least three strands or thoughts in this hymn.

Where she says, first of all, God has blessed me. God has blessed me. She is in awe, I think, of what has happened to her.

[35 : 03] An angel who has appeared to her. Blessed are you. Oh, favored one. She's in awe of her cousin Elizabeth and what she has said.

Blessed are you among women. And blessed is the fruit of your womb. She's amazed at Elizabeth's testimony that that three, six-month-old fetus, three months from birth, leaps for joy in the presence of the Messiah.

And Mary recognizes how blessed she is. My spirit rejoices, she says, in God my Savior.

It's quite an amazing thought. Mary, often put on a pedestal of sainthood by many parts of the church to this day, describes Jesus as her Savior.

Because she recognizes her sin. She recognizes that she needs a Savior. I wonder tonight, is that what we magnify about Jesus?

[36 : 27] This day, it's full of plenty messages about Jesus. But I'm not convinced that they're always about the salvation that Jesus brings.

Certainly not the salvation that Jesus himself spoke of. And not the salvation that Mary is speaking of here.

of one who has looked on the humble. Who has looked on the lowly. And brought them up. Who has come with a message for the generations.

That will inspire their awe and their worship and their praise. The versions of Jesus we have today are there to rescue us from somewhat different hellish realities.

There are peddlers of a version of Jesus today who would say he'll rescue you from poverty. He'll bring you prosperity.

[37 : 37] Peddlers of a Jesus who offer healing. He'll heal you of all of your sickness. Just have faith in him enough. There are peddlers of a version of Christ who will heal you from your own psychosis.

From your own psychological trauma. And who will say Jesus is the solution to these things. We just have to look at what he says. A version of Jesus who will tell us that we should all just love one another and all will be well.

There are many versions of this man, Jesus. But the truth is that he is a savior for sinners.

Mary's hymn, it sits in that lineage of Psalm 103. A psalm that is full of reference to the fact that he takes our guilt and our sin.

And purges it away. He does not deal with us as we deserve. This God of ours. Not because he overlooks our sin.

[38 : 47] But because he sent a savior to do something with our sin. To carry our sin in himself. And to take it away from us.

And in the process to carry on to us his righteousness. Imputing his goodness. And making us lovely in God's sight.

Mary could do nothing. She couldn't save herself. She couldn't put her standing before God in the right place.

She is amazed by what the angel is saying to her. Not because she's full of false humility. But because she knows she doesn't deserve this. She hasn't earned this.

But because she is astonished. But because she is astonished. At the favor and the grace of almighty God. She is someone who needed a savior.

[39 : 50] And tonight so are we. We are men and women and boys and girls who need a savior in Jesus. Who will take away our sin and guilt.

Who will cleanse us from all sin and iniquity. Who will deal with the brokenness that is in our hearts. And who will bring spiritual life.

Where there is only spiritual death and barrenness. And so tonight.

We can sing with Mary. My soul magnifies the Lord. It's interesting the way she puts it as well.

When she talks about her soul doing this. We have to kind of wonder. What does she mean by that? I mean is she talking about just. You know we tend to think of souls as being a part of us. We tend to think of our soul as the part of us.

[40 : 48] That will go to be with God in heaven when we die. And our bodies will stay here on earth. So is it that sort of thing? Is it that consciousness? Well maybe. Almost. The idea of the soul in Jewish thought.

In Hebrew thought. Is that it's. It's the very core of the being. The innermost self. In a sense the totality of self. The wholeness of ourselves.

It's not there for something half-hearted. When someone of Mary's background and worldview would say.

My soul magnifies the Lord. What she means by that is my whole being. Everything about me. Wants to make much. Of this God. I want people to see.

How he has saved me. I want people to see. How he has blessed me. And I want that to be overflowing. In my whole being. And you can see it.

[41 : 47] She's overwhelmed. By the sheer magnitude. Of the blessing of God at this time. The miracle of the virgin birth. Of that conception. Within her own womb. The wonder of her older

cousin.

Elizabeth. Who has now fallen pregnant. At an old age. God is at work here. There's amazing things happening. And then as she arrives. Visiting Elizabeth. That wonder of John.

Leaping within Elizabeth's womb. And rejoicing. And hearing of the presence of the Messiah. What a wonder this is. That God has broken into the lives of men and women in this world.

And brought salvation. And so we bless. And glorify his name. God has blessed us.

He has blessed Mary. He has blessed us. And this Christmas. That story of blessing. Is ours to tell.

[42 : 50] That's because secondly. Mary rejoices. Not only in the fact that God has blessed her. In this profound way. But secondly. She announces in amazement and wonder. God has used me.

And this is part of the wonder of this. He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. And behold. From now on. All generations will call me blessed. She says. For he who is mighty.

Has done great things for me. And holy is his name. God has done something in her. God has blessed her. In the crudest sense.

You could say it's. Simply the fact that he has. By the power of the Holy Spirit. Overshadowed her. And conceived within her womb. The Messiah. And that is incredible.

It is remarkable. But God has blessed her. And not only her. But all generations. Because all generations.

[43 : 52] Will call her blessed. So the blessing. That is upon Mary. And the way that God. Is about to use her. For this wonderful purpose. Of bringing.

God the Son. Enfleshed. Into the world. Is a blessing. To everyone. It's a blessing. That flows tonight. Through the.

The ages of history. Through these 2,000 years. That flows tonight. To Stornoway. To the pews. In this church. It's a blessing. That flows.

Into our homes. It's a blessing. That flows. From us. Into the lives. Of people around us. It's a blessing.

That everyone. Who comes to faith. gets to share in. And to experience. And to know. Why Mary is therefore. To be called blessed. Because she has done.

[44 : 45] Such an incredible thing. Not in her own strength. But because God used her. For his wonderful purpose. He has revealed.

Through her. His name. That's really the blessing. The blessing that Mary experiences.

The way that God has used her. Is to reveal. His name. And you might think. Well. I mean. That's to be seen.

Isn't it? You know. She's been told. That she's to call her son. Jesus. Is that what this means? That when the child is born.

He will be called. Jesus. That's the name of our God. Tonight. That's the one we've worshipped.

That's the one we've come. To give glory. And praise to. To Jesus.

[45 : 44] Our Savior. And there is a sense. In which that is the case. That Mary. Being the mother of Jesus. Is the one who brings him.

Into the world. And there. In the stable of Bethlehem. In that manger. They give him a name. They call their son.

Jesus. As the angel has instructed them. Because he will save his people. From their sins. Because Jesus is. God saves. The Savior. But at a deeper level.

Something more of God's name. Has been revealed there. At a deeper level. What's actually been revealed. Is the character of God. When we talk about someone's name.

And this is certainly the case. In the Bible. That whenever you see someone's. Referring to someone's name. It's not literally just their name. That's been referred to. It's the whole reputation.

That they carry. What kind of name do you have.

[46 : 44] In your community. Are you known as somebody. Who's honest. And truthful. And truthful. Reliable. Well God is known by his name.

He has a reputation. He has a. He has a fame. That is spread. Throughout the nations. And part of that. Is for us to look upon.

The character of God. And see it. In the person of Jesus. Jesus. And so when Jesus. Comes into the world. As John tells us. In John's gospel. Jesus.

Who is the light of the world. Is the word. The logos. Of God. Made flesh. And dwelling among us. And we have seen his glory. Glory. As of the only son. From the father.

Full of grace. And truth. And Mary. Is acknowledging. That she is. The means by which. God. Is going to. Accomplish this.

[47 : 38] That she is the one. Who will bring. This wonderful. Revelation. Of God. Himself. Into the world. That he has looked upon her.

One of the humblest of people. The lowest of people. An unmarried virgin. From the town of Nazareth. In the middle of nowhere. In Galilee.

And she gets to bring. The son of God. Into the world. In the incarnation. That's what she's been told.

You will conceive. In your womb. And bear a son. And you shall call his name. Jesus. He will be great. And he will be called. The son of the most high. And the Lord God.

Will give to him. The throne of his father. David. He will be known. As the son of the most high. He will be known. He will be known. He will be known. Words that echo back to.

[48 : 41] Genesis 14. Where Melchizedek is a. Priest of God. Most high. The one who rules over heaven and earth. The angel says to her.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. And the power of the most high. Will overshadow you. And therefore the child to be born. Will be called holy. The son of God. And now Mary rejoices.

Because God has revealed. His holy name. His reputation. Through her. And tonight.

That's still happening. It doesn't happen in the same way. The coming of Jesus. Through the virgin birth. Is a one-off event.

There is nothing like it. But tonight. There is a remarkable truth. That those of us who are believers. Are tonight also.

[49 : 42] Showing. Revealing. In a sense. Giving birth to. The name. The reputation of God. Through our words and actions. You know.

What we say and do. Brings into people's experience. The character of God. We get to show it. We get to tell people.

About the Savior. Jesus. We get to show people. The mercy and the love of God. We get to speak. Of what God has done in our lives. The great mystery. Of each one of our stories. Of redemption and salvation. The great stories. Of the way God has rescued us.

From the pit. How he has taken us. Some from alcoholism. Some from the depths of sin and depravity. Some from the depths of self-righteousness.

[50 : 37] From an assurance. Of being so good. That we're almost perplexed. Why do I need a Savior in the first place? And he's rescued us.

From all of these different experiences. Brought us to experience. Salvation tonight. And we can echo. Therefore the words of Mary. What has he done?

Well. He has looked on. The humble estate of his servant. He's taken us. And used us.

To be a means of his blessing to others. The remarkable truth. Of the Magnificat.

That Mary is glorifying God for. Is that God takes and uses the humble. For the most profound of purposes. He takes us in the simplicity of our understanding. He takes us in the limitations of our ability.

[51 : 38] He takes us with the limited means. That we have at our disposal. He takes us with all of the flaws. And the things that are just wrong with us. And he turns that to his own glory.

And he sends us into this world. To be ambassadors of his son. And tonight if we just glimpsed for a moment.

The majesty of that. The creator of the cosmos. The creator of the cosmos tonight. Loves. The people.

And the town of Stornoway enough. That he has sent you and I. We would burst into song. We would burst into praise.

Because he has sent a savior in Jesus. And he has privileged us. To tell of him. Tonight.

[52 : 43] Tonight. We should stand in wonder and awe. Of a God who does remarkable things. A God who transforms the world.

And he does it. Using his saints. In the most ordinary of people. To accomplish the most extraordinary of things.

But not only is there a sense of wonder in what Mary says. But there is finally also. A great sense of. The mercy of God.

As promised. God has done. He has. He has. Basically. God has done what he said he was going to do. He has.

It's interesting as you go through this. You see the name of the God. God's reputation. It's a reputation for mercy that has been revealed. And the language that Mary uses in her song. Reflects that.

[53 : 48] 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 humbly state. He has filled the hungry with good things.

The rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel. In remembrance of his mercy. Now all of these are lines. From the Psalms. They're lines from.

The song book of the children of Israel. And they're lines that are reflected now. In Mary's song of thanksgiving and praise. She's magnifying the Lord. Because her experience has been shaped by these same Psalms.

And when it comes an opportunity for her to express this. She relies on that language. She taps into. The scriptural language of the Old Testament. To express.

Her wonder. Her sense of awe. And praise to God for what he has done. And what that's littered with. Are promises. Because God said he wasn't going to do this just as a one-off.

[54 : 53] He says he was going to keep doing it. He was going to raise up his people. He was going to deliver them. He was going to restore them. He was going to bring fresh blessing to them.

He takes them out of Egypt as promised. Delivers them to the promised land. He takes them over the Jordan into the promised land as promised. He delivers them in the days of David as promised. He establishes a throne forever as promised. He delivers them from exile and brings them home as promised.

God is a promise making God. And a promise keeping God. And Mary's focus as this song draws to its conclusion. Is the fact that God has promised mercy.

And he is now delivering it. That there's something solid that you can lay hold of there. There is something tonight that we can say. Through the eyes of faith we can say.

[55 : 51] I believe this. I believe this about my God tonight. I believe this is who he is. That he is a promise keeping God. And that is the message I suppose of Christmas.

The Messiah doesn't just pop into the world 2,000 years ago for no reason. The story of Jesus and his coming isn't the pivotal point in human history for no reason.

It's because he came as promised. And he came to achieve something promised. And whilst he was here.

He made fresh promises. And tonight these are promises that we can lay hold of. These are tonight still promises made to us.

That are abundant in the mercy of God. And so there is that promise. The ultimate promise. He is coming. That's what the whole Bible ends with.

[56 : 56] Come Lord Jesus. There is that sense of expectation of his return. But he's also promised in the meanwhile that he has gone to prepare a place for us. His promise to the thief on the cross.

Today you will be with me in paradise. It's a real promise. It's the promise to the disciples. That I'm never going to abandon you or forsake you.

I'm never going to leave you. It's the promise that's there to the church. That whatever we go through. Whatever experiences we have.

Whatever sorrows and affliction are visited upon the church. Perhaps individually or perhaps on a grand scale. As I'm sure tonight many Christians. Maybe the few Christians left in Syria.

Are quaking over. What's going to happen to them. The promise of God is that he is still for them. That he is still available.

[57 : 53] That he is still their redeemer. That he still values and loves them. Because they are his in Christ. And tonight that's for us.

The sense of wonder. Extends to the promises that are there for us as well. That God is revealing his strength. In the experiences that we have.

Day by day as well. That we can sing these words. Not merely because Jesus has come. But because that wasn't just something that happened. 2000 years ago.

It's because it's something that makes a difference. In our lives today. It's because it's something that makes a difference. In our lives tonight. It's because it's something that makes a difference.

And could make a difference to your life.

Right now. Because Jesus. Came. As a savior. And tonight no matter how lost. You might feel.
[58 : 51] Perhaps even how lost. You might truly be. In the misery. Of your sin. And your distance from God. There is a savior.

Who promises. To save. There is a savior. For us. And so tonight.

You and I are invited. In the grace of God. To this place of mercy. Where Christ has come. Where hope is revealed.

Where salvation. Is to be found. God. Magnify him with me. Glorify his name. Because he has done.

Wonderful things. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. I pray that each one of us tonight.

[59 : 48] Would be able to echo these words. My spirit rejoices. In God. My savior. What a blessing it is. To know that you have saved. From the uttermost.

The lost. And the. The desperate. And the hopeless. Of this world. And we thank you. That you will continue to do this.

Until the last of your own. Are brought home. We pray tonight. Father. Therefore. That you would bless us. To be able to see. To magnify. To look through that.

Intensifying image. Of Christ. To see the wonder. Of what he has done. And for us to display that. And show it. In our lives. This coming week. Help us to be able to tell.

Of what Jesus has done. And to rejoice. That Christmas. Is not simply a memorial. To something. Two thousand years ago. But it is a story. Of salvation. And redemption.

[60 : 45] That is going to go on. And be shown. In the fullness. Of eternity. As being your great work. Bless us. And help us to see Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen. We're going to sing. In conclusion.

In Psalm 24. In the Scottish Psalter. Page 320. Sorry. Page 230. My numbers mix up. Page 230. We're going to sing.

From verse 7. Through to the end of the Psalm. You gates lift up. Your heads on high. You doors that last foray. Be lifted up. That so the King of glory. Enter me. But who of glory is the King?

The mighty Lord is this. Even that same Lord. That great in might. And strong in battle is. This is a song of. The incarnation. Certainly. The victory of Jesus.

[61 : 43] A song that will one day be sung. I believe by the church. And in glory as well. Christ's triumphal return to this world. When he comes. In the last day. We're going to sing to the tune.

St. George's Edinburgh. We'll start to sing. We'll start to sing. Let's go.

Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go.

Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Alleluia. Alleluia.

[64 : 10] Alleluia. Alleluia. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and the fellowship of God, the Holy Spirit, be with each one of us now and always. Amen