

The Magnificat Luke 1:39-56

This is a marvelous song, the first song of the incarnation, from Mary.

- The **lyrical depth is very edifying.**
- At IDC, we like songs that have rich theological content (**except when dancing!**)
- We try to avoid the type of songs that Mike Bird says go a bit like this:
“Jesus, Jesus, you’re terrific // For you I’d swim the Pacific // Yeah baby, yeah baby, yeah, yeah, yeah.” Only, they’re not that deep!
- While a lot of Xmas songs are very rich, others are often **very sentimental, and lullaby-sounding.**
- But Mary’s song blends **God-centered theology with beautiful, artistic poetry.**

If you’re not a Christian, this is a wonderful passage for anyone interested in the **Christian faith.** One pastor calls this **“Mary on the Christian Life.”**

- She alludes to many important themes of the Christian life in her song.
- Luke itself is a good book to study (1:3). He’s a careful researcher/historian.

If you’re a teenager, you have a wonderful example in Mary to follow.

- Of course, Mary is a great model for any Christian, but esp. for teenagers!!
- **Prefer Mary over Miley a role model!**
- Teenagers struggle w/ basic heart questions like:
 - **“Does anyone care about me?” Does anyone see me?”**
 - **“Will anything satisfy my soul?” “What’s my purpose in life?”**
- Young person, Mary *gives you answers.*
 - She knows that God **cares for her and sees her!**
 - “He has looked upon the humble estate of his servant”
 - She’s a teenager who **has found satisfaction** – in God!
 - “God fills the hungry with good things.”
 - She’s a teenager that **has found purpose!**
 - Westminster: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”
 - She’s expressing that purpose in this little song - magnify/rejoice.
- She is overcome with the **beauty and majesty of God** at a young age.

If you’re a senior saint, then you have a wonderful example in **Elizabeth** (advanced in years)– example of faith, humility, and a loving, older encourager to the younger Mary.

The Context for Mary’s Song (39-45)

V. 39 – Mary makes a journey to Judah.

- It was a dangerous journey, of about hundred miles of rugged wasteland. **Impressive for a young girl! Serena Williams has nothing on her!**
- She remained there for three months (v. **56**)

V 40 – The **“visitation”** as some refer to it.

God visits these two obscure women!

- **Two women touched by God's grace** – a senior citizen and a teenager.
- Elizabeth was old and barren (a social stigma, **1:7**).
- But by God's gracious intervention, she's now 6 months pregnant!
- She's at home waiting to give birth to John the Baptist.
- Mary had just conceived.
- The angel had told Mary about Elizabeth [**read 1:26-38**].
- **Elizabeth's conception was further confirmation that the angel's word to Mary was true.**
- So Mary took the hint to go talk with her kinswoman.

They are probably left alone to visit with each other.

- Remember Zechariah, her husband, was made **mute** because of initial unbelief.
- Someone said Elizabeth had two blessings – **a baby and a mute husband!**
 - **And what a baby he must of been judged by his later personality!**
 - **He's like a mountain man jack, a grizzle Adams!**
 - **HE would have fit in at IDC with that great beard.**
 - **Jesus would call him "the greatest man born of woman."**
- The women discussed the news – John the Forerunner, and Jesus the Messiah!
- What a discussion this must have been!

V. 41: What follows is an explosion of Holy Spirit joy!

42: "blessed are you..." - **no jealousy, but joy, not bitterness but happiness**

43: "...The 'mother of my Lord' should come to me?" – **humility, awe, wonder**

44: Unborn John leaps for joy, a preview of his ministry – exalting Jesus.

- His **pulpit is the womb of his mother!**
- Leaping with joy – she recognized John as a person with emotions already
- **The coming of Christ makes people leap for joy!**

45 – Elizabeth isn't worshipping Mary, but blessing her faith.

- Mary took God at his word. So Elizabeth blesses her, honors her.
- **Here's a great ministry for older saints!**

Mary's Song (46-55)

She may have composed it ahead of time, perhaps on the journey

- It too is an explosion of holy joy.

NT Wright:

"It's the gospel before the gospel, a fierce bright shout of triumph thirty weeks before Bethlehem, thirty years before Calvary and Easter. It goes with a swing and a clap and a stamp. It's all about God, and it's all about revolution. And it's all because of Jesus— Jesus who's only just been conceived, not yet born, but who has made Mary giddy with excitement and hope and triumph. In many cultures today, it's the women who really know how to celebrate, to sing and dance, with their bodies and voices saying things far deeper than words. That's how Mary's song comes across here."

- The title comes from the first word in Latin, *Magnificat*, or “magnifies.”
- It’s the first of 4 nativity songs
 - Zechariah’s *Benedictus* (1:68ff)
 - Angels, *Gloria*. (2:14)
 - Simeon, *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32)
- Shepherds also responding in praise in v. 20.
- Anna, Luke 2:36-38...An old woman, her response?

What God has done must be sung.

This is the Christmas Spirit! Worship.

People ask, “Are you in the Christmas spirit? What is that?”

- “Decorations? Gifts? **Cousin Eddie?**
- **You have missed the “spirit of Christmas” if you miss Jesus.**
- **It’s like having a birthday party without the birthday boy present!!!**
- Christmas is about the exaltation of what God has done for us in Christ, and all that he has for us in Christ.

Three aspects of Mary’s song worthy of our consideration and emulation:

#1: Soul-Satisfying Worship (1:46-47)

Notice the opening words: “soul,” “spirit,” “magnifies the Lord,” “my Savior,”

- Her worship is **wholehearted**
 - She is worshiping with all that she is – mind, soul, heart, strength.
 - What would make you celebrate from the depths of your being, without inhibition? - no debt? No cancer?
 - How would you respond to such magnificent news?
 - Call some folks? Dance? Shout? Write a song? Weep for joy?
 - You can understand Mary....
 - “I will sing and make melody with all my being” (**Ps 108:1**)
 - **Psalm 103:1**
 - “Making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph 5:19)
 - Here’s hope for those who have no musical skills - music in your heart!
 - My first time singing corporately: “**You did your best honey**”
 - I think I was more into the guitar because I was a single guy – and we all know that *attractive ladies go for guys with guitars* – just look at Donnie. And Manny. And A-Rod. And so on.

But I can make melody with my heart!

- Her worship is **personal**. “my Savior.”
 - Can you say that?
 - **Mary needed a Savior like the rest of us.**
 - Christmas is historical, theological, and intensely personal. It’s for you!
- Her worship is **directed toward God** – “magnifies the Lord”

- This is similar to many of the Psalms isn't it?
- **Ps 34:3**: "Oh come and magnify..." (**proposal story**).
- Let's make His name great in our life, marriage, ministry
- This is what we were made for.

Life is about **magnifying God** and in doing so you will **maximize your joy**.

- These seem to be **at odds** – joy and God's glory – but they're not.
- Notice – "**rejoices**" and "**magnifies**" go together.
- The world thinks that to maximize joy you need to minimize God.
- But Mary shows us that **to maximize joy you need to maximize God!**

#2: Bible-Saturated Worship (1:46-55)

Stop to consider the whole song for a moment.

Where all of these verses come from? It's simple: Mary knew her Bible!

- Many people don't think Mary could have written this because he was **so young**, and it is so majestic and **so theological**.
- We do believe she wrote it, and they are correct, it is deeply theological.
- She had learned the Scriptures while **growing up at home and in the synagogue**.
- The book of **James and Jesus' teaching** reflects many of the same themes – it's an example of passing on the teaching from generation to generation!
- It is **loaded with OT allusions and phrases**.
- There are echoes of Genesis, Deuteronomy, 1-2 Samuel, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, and more.
- The most **obvious is the allusions to Hannah's song**, another woman unexpectedly **expecting!**

Hannah (1 Sam 2)	Mary (Luke 1)
1 "My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.	46 "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
2 There is none holy like the Lord:	49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.	52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;
5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.	53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

She may have meditated for days about Hannah's song before penning this beautiful piece.

You can also hear Psalm **113:5-9** (read)

Being a young woman, she probably loved the stories of the Old Testament women of faith like Sarah, Deborah, Hannah, Ruth, and Abigail.

We hear today, “kids can’t learn theology.” Really?

- If you can order from Starbucks you can be a study of the Bible!

Not just for teens, but everyone: Fill your mind with the truth of God’s Word (Col 3:16-17).

- Worship is a response to revelation of God.
- If worship is stale, then it might be because you have not mediated on God’s truth.

#3: God-Centered Worship (1:46-55)

It’s not hard to see this – just look at the word “He” – it’s all about God.

She praises God for who God is, What He has done, and what He will do

So then, she reflects on **God’s attributes** and **God’s actions**.

A. God’s Attributes (49-52, 54)

This is instructive for us.

- When you read the Bible, look for the character of God..
- A reason this is important is that it is easy to be self-absorbed in this world.
- We can turn inward, think about our circumstances, and be led to worry, or bitterness, etc.
- **Mary has a lot to worry about! She’s giving birth to God’s Son!**
- We can replace worry with worship, as we consider the being of God.

You could perhaps identify upward of fifteen attributes of God (his grace, his sovereignty, his kindness, patience). Notice three that appear clearly.

God is Mighty (49, 51-52)

1:37 – For with this God, nothing shall be impossible

God displayed his might Mary’s situation by powerfully bringing forth **a virgin birth!**

- The Christmas story is not occasion to be lulled to sleep, but to have your faith built up.
- Don’t scoff at his power – look at this story!
- Don’t despair in your trial – look at this story!
- Look at this God!
- “**There’s nothing more dangerous than to lose your awe of God**”

51-52: He has power over the mighty ones on earth.

The “mighty one” **fighters for and saves his people.**

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17).

(What a thought! God singing over us! It shouldn't surprise us of the emphasis on singing since we're made in God's image).

God is Holy (49b)

- His name is "holy."
- God's name refers to his character or his essence. His essence is holiness.
- God is in a category by himself.
- All his attributes are perfect, and they all cohere in a perfect harmony called holiness.
- **Luke 1:35**...the angels, "he will be called holy, the Son of God."

God is Merciful (50a, 54)

- Here is this concept of God's "hesed" his loyal love, **faithful** love.
- Psalm 103:2-4, 12, 14

54-55: "He has helped Israel in remembrance of his mercy."

- In his loyal love, he is fulfilling his promises.
- Our world is full of un-trustworthy spin-stories, but our God doesn't play the spin game – his word is true and trustworthy.
- What he promised, he fulfilled.
- What faithfulness! What mercy!

B. God's Actions: He Lifts the Humble and Humbles the Proud

Again, we could outline a long list of things God does here.

Mary summarizes it in one phrase: "**He has done great things for me.**" (49)

- We could say the same. (Ps 126)
- Xmas is not "good advice" but good news of what God has done!
- "He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great things" (Deut. 10:21)
- God's actions are not just for Mary, **verse 50** – "generation to generation"
- She then goes on to describe God's pattern of activity in the **past** that will continue in the **future**.

The main activity that I find here is this:
God lifts the humble, and God humbles the proud.

He did this in Mary's case, and he will do it in the future.

Luke has a particular interest in spotlighting Jesus' ministry to the outcast, the poor, the tax collector, and the marginalized.

- **Luke 4:18-20**
- **Luke 5:20-25 (Beatitudes)**
- **Lk 14:11**
- **Lk 18:14**

i. God Lifts the Humble (46-53)

46-49 – g the v_Mary’s testimony

Mary was a “nobody” from a “nowhere-place” whom God Almighty visited and lifted in His sovereign grace.

- God did not come to major department stores, to Times Square, on a stretch Limo, in a big parade.
- He came to a teenage peasant girl in an obscure town, w/ the King born in a feeding trough.

50-53: The Testimony of Others

50: God lifts up those who **fear him, who bow before him in reverence.**

- James 4:10.

Augustine: “For those who want to learn God’s ways, humility is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing.”

52b: The humble are exalted

- **Isa 57:15** – *For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

53: The humble are the hungry – and they find satisfaction in God.

- The proud are the self-satisfied
- He has filled the hungry with good things.
- God satisfies the spiritually hungry who come to him (**Matt 5:6**)
- **Rolling Stones**, “I can’t get no satisfaction... I try and I try and I try”
- **Piper – First book -- Hunger for God** – “God is most glorified....”
- Christmas won’t satisfy; only Christ can satisfy!

ii. God Humbles the Proud (51-53)

Mary now praises God for his humbling of people and nations who refuse to bow before Him.

- Her song shifts from her personal situations to a global, universal focus.
- She is looking back into history and into the eschatological future.

A big emphasis in 51-53: Reversal.

God takes the conventional standards of greatness and turns them upside down:

- **Attitude reversal (51)**
- **Social Reversal (52)**
- **Spiritual/Material Reversal (53)**

Danish Philosopher, Kierkegaard – “all the price tags have been changed.”

Mary was able to sort out the price tags; she knew what really mattered.

Attitude Reversal (51)

- **God will scatter those who feel no need for him; who are proud of their attainments and capabilities.**
- God did this w/ Pharaoh, the Philistines, and & Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:29-ff.)...
- He will do this in future judgment as well.

A Social Reversal (52)

- God will bring down the powerful and exalt the humble.
- This too has happened at various times in biblical history.
- Exalt the humble “the meek will inherit the earth.” **Prepare for a reversal!**
 - God exalts the people who do his will.

A Fullness Reversal (53)

- **Psalm 107:9** – “God satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.”
 - Isaiah 55, “come to the water...”
 - Revelation 22:17, let him who is thirsty, come, without price
 - Open your mouth wide and I will fill it (Ps. 81:10)
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be **satisfied** (Luke 6:21)
- “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry.”
- **Airline – little snack**

Are you hungry?

- **power won't satisfy, possessions won't satisfy, worldly pleasures won't satisfy**
- “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you”
- Are you inviting others to eat?
- (**My guacamole - taste and see! That's evangelism**)

He has sent the rich away empty (53) the "calloused rich"

- It is clear from Mary's words (and from the whole Bible) that God is not partial to the rich, the powerful, or the proud.
- **Rich Young Ruler** went away very sad because he treasured things more than the grace of Jesus.
- **Revelation 3:17-18**
- “Man in his pomp will not remain.” (Ps 49:12)

God gives mercy to those who fear him.

The humble are shown mercy and the proud receive justice.

**God lifts the humble, and humbles the proud.
Therefore, we must stay low.**

He will humble individuals, nations, or churches, if we fail to maintain a proper sense of awe before Him. Don't trifle with the Almighty.

C. God's Actions: He Fulfills His Promises (54-55)

Mary looked back on God's covenant promise to Israel stated in Genesis 12:3 – *All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.*

Israel's hope through the ages — God would topple the bullies, the oppressors, and send the Messiah. He came. The Revolution followed.

- *Jesus is the great **offspring**, and it is through him that we are blessed.*
- *We are Abraham's descendants through faith.*
- The birth of Christ is a continuation of God's faithfulness beginning with Abraham, and really from the beginning of the Bible.

Mary's story doesn't start with her.

- **Genesis 3:15**, the first gospel, we have been awaiting for one who would come from the seed of the woman who would crush the enemy's head.
- **Galatians 4:4**: in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, *born of woman...*
- **Isaiah 7:14**: A young virgin who will give birth to this Son.
 - We have been waiting throughout the biblical narrative
 - Where is this Son?
 - Who is this woman?
 - Then the Angel Gabriel shows up to Mary and says, you're the one...
- God fulfilled his promise.

2:11: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

2:13: And suddenly, the heavenly host praised God...

This baby put joy in Mary's heart, and a song on her lips.

We too rejoice in Christ, not just in his conception, but in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, reign, and return.

The Spurge:

“So then, to conclude, **here is something for every child of God to do.** You can all magnify the Lord, and you may all rejoice in Him. **You cannot all preach. If you could, who would there be to hear you? If all were preachers, where would be the hearers?** But you can all praise God. If there is any brother or sister here who has only one talent, let not such a one say, “I cannot do anything.” You can magnify the Lord.... To be happy in Him is to praise God. The mere fact of our **being happy in the Lord makes music in His ears.** If you are one of His children, you can be happy in Him, so get out of those doleful dumps; cast out that spirit of murmuring and complaint which so often possesses you. Pray the Lord to help you shake off your natural tendency to look on the dark side of everything, and say, ‘No, no; I must not do that. After all, I am not on the road

to hell; I am on the way to heaven; and this world is the waiting room to heaven, so my soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior.”

Amen. May the Lord makes us happy in the Lord, and may we in turn magnify Him.

Even now, as we prepare for the Table, we are reminded that he has looked on our low estate, and has filled the hungry with good things.