

Sermon: Magnify our God
Text: Luke 1:46-55

Proposition: We glorify God no matter our circumstances because of the significance of the salvation of God in Christ for us.

Prayer:

Introduction:

Does your soul magnify the Lord? This is the question that our text begs you to ask yourself. Does your soul magnify the Lord today?

You may not find this question easy to answer. You may wonder can I magnify the Lord when my day to day life is so ordinary? Or you may still be preoccupied with how hard it was to even get your family here.

In this Christmas season it is good for us to consider these things because it tis' the season for.... Added stress on our budgets and schedules. It a time when some may feel lonely or the friction in families. These day to day realities make the joy of our Savior feel distant.

God invites and enables such little people in need of mercy to bring him praise. In today's text Mary reflects on the evidence of God's redemption, long expected now coming to pass, through song.

And I thought in coming here today to quote Tiny Tim of the Christmas Carol that it might be pleasant for you to reflect this

Christmas season on he who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

You may know Mary's Song by its traditional name "The Magnificat". This traditional title comes from the first word of this Song in the Latin text.

This song serves as a holy and inspired commemoration of praise for the redemption God is working through The Lord Jesus Christ.

For this reason, it is no surprise it has been treasured by the church. We have records of it being used as a regular part of Christian worship as early as the year 500. We may call it one of the earliest Christmas Carols.

The Question for you is can your heart sing this song? Can you sing of our redemption this way? While our hearts are often slow to bring God praise. We will see Mary rejoice in God as her Savior and show him holy fear. And will learn the great reasons God gives us to glorify him as He fulfills all of his precious promises

Section 1: Magnify the Lord By Rejoicing in His Salvation

First we will examine the joy Mary has in glorifying the Lord. We read of this in verses 46-49:

⁴⁶And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

One thing unique about Luke’s gospel is the amount of detail found in the narratives around the birth of Jesus Christ. Luke tells us the source of these details came from the careful research he did interviewing eye witnesses of these events.

However, the beginning of Luke’s gospel is unique in another way. It begins with several songs.

Mary, Zachariah, the Angels, and Simeon all sing in Luke’s account of the nativity. What is the significance of all this singing?

The answer lies in considering where else the Biblical narratives:

The First place we may think of are the songs of Moses and Miriam after the Exodus. We do not have to turn many pages to find the song of Deborah commemorating the salvation of the people

from the hands of oppressive Canaanite military. Then 1 Samuel records Hannah song when the kingship of Israel is being established.

What should this kind of pattern teach us?

God marks his great acts of salvation through song. Luke wants the reader to know that the account he is writing is worthy of such new songs. God is, in incarnation, working the supreme work of redemption for his people. This is why Mary sings.

We often associate the scriptural commands to sing a new song, with singing contemporary songs or the need to offer a fresh response of thanks and praise to God. This is wonderful way to respond to the kindness of God but much less what the Bible has in mind when it tells us to sing a new song.

Let's examine two Psalms commanding new songs.

Psalm 96:1–3 (ESV)

¹Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!

²Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

In Psalm 96 we see it is all the earth that is to sing the new song. The earth is to sing this song because the marvelous works of God have been declared among the nations. The new song is for Gods' people

sing even those from among the gentiles. The new song commemorates new salvation. We see this again in Psalm 98.

Psalm 98:1–2 (ESV)

¹Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

²The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his
righteousness in the sight of the nations.

This Psalm like the last relate the singing of new songs to the salvation of the nations. Psalm 98 makes clear, what is the cause of this new Song. It is the working of the salvation by God's holy arm.

Like in days of the exodus, the birth of is a time to sing a new song as God brought salvation to his people in all nations. Because as in all ages God's saved people are singing people.

And this is the cause of Mary's magnifying the Lord. I very much like the use of this English word. Mary's soul magnifies the glory of God.

God is all together glorious. God's glory is perfect and cannot be added to by us but we can magnify it. We can bring it into focus like a good lens or enlarge its visibility.

Mary expounds the glory of God this way in her son.

The first way Mary magnifies the Lord is by her spirit rejoicing in God. . It is in the most profound sense heart felt. Praise that honors God is not something external. And the praise of believers and hypocrites cannot be differentiated externally.

Certainly, there are those who externally show their disinterest in the worship of God. But hypocritical can appear just as passionate as of the believer. The difference is internal.

If we lack this kind of praise of God from the heart it is because we lack the joy of salvation. We of all people in America should know that we may be satiated with material blessings and be unable to rejoice in God.

Despite our affluence our minds are still full of anxiety. We will not have heartfelt joy in the Lord until we are assured that God is a Savior to us. This is what Christ came to do and why he left us his word. That we may know the God who is mighty and that He has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Mary does not have anxiety because she has God as her savior. And she knows the strength of his arm. Neither you nor Mary worship a God with a feeble arm.

Mary relates the acts of God to her special role in history. She says,

“For he has looked at the humble estate of his servant. For behold from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

You may know this declaration by Mary is taken by Roman Catholics as a proof text for the veneration of Mary in their prayers. Luke nor Mary had any such meaning in mind. In fact, rather than endorse such belief this teaching would have us reject such superstition

God looks down, at her humble estate. This is not God noticing her virtuous humility from heaven. The word humble is being used another way. to communicate her lowly and insignificant conditions.

We use the word this way when we speak of humble beginnings. God saw Mary not because she was worthy or able but because she had nothing outwardly commending herself.

The great blessing of Mary is not due to something she could accomplished or some divine role she has been given in redemption. No in fact the virgin birth is a sign that magnifies God for he alone could bring it to pass.

This is what Mary herself says in her song. Why will she be called blessed? Because She is holy? Because she is full of grace?

No because he who is might has done great things for me! Mary is called blessed because of what God has done for her.

God doing great things for the humble of the world is cause of joy for us also. Because God still saves the lowly.

like those Paul wrote to in Corinth- For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

God calls us the lowly to the display the fullness of his power. This is why the blessing of Mary is such good news to us because God sees fit work through those who seem to be of no account to magnify his own glory.

Point 2: Magnify the Glory of God by fearing him

God's glory is not just magnified by his singing people but also by their fear him. Mary also magnifies God in her holy fear of him.

Read Verse 50:

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

For our souls to sing this song with Mary we must have the same Holy fear of God she does.

There is so little fear of God in the world today. Even in our churches there is much confusion about it.

What is the fear of God? Most times when the fear of God is explained it is reduced to a respect or honor of God. This again might be a symptom of how little fear of God there is today. There is a reason the scripture uses a word fear and we should be slow to remove the what we consider negative aspects. This is not to say that fear of the Lord is a negative thing. It is not like the sinful fear of Adam and Eve when they hid in the garden.

The fear of God Mary speaks is not a fear that drives us away from God but it is the response of being in his holy presence.

Hear how Jeremiah speaks of this fear coming on us: (33:9)

And this city shall be to me a name of joy,
a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth,
who shall hear of all the good that I do for them.

They shall fear and tremble
because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

This kind of fear is not the flipside of the joy Mary spoke of earliest. Jeremiah says we shall fear and tremble for all the good God is doing. This is why it is scriptures tell us that it is a delight to fear the Lord (Neh 1:11)

God as He is, consumes the thoughts of those who fear him. True knowledge of the Great I AM will stop you in your tracks. This fear is

less like being scared of the dark and more like the trembling a groom does as his bride walks down aisle to him.

There is one more quality of this fear to take note of. Holy fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom. This is because fear of God puts you in your place.

And it drives you to live all of life and making all your decisions in reference to God and what He has commanded.

In this sense whatever you pay the most deference to is what you fear the most.

This is why God calls us not fear what the world fears but to Fear him alone. Because this kind of fear dispels all other fears.

Calvin describes this life directing fear this way. The Fear Mary Speaks of is the fear that keeps covenant with God. This means that once we have placed our full trust in him we call upon him for every need, we are patient when he chooses to chastise us with the rod, and we deal uprightly with our neighbor. At the same time we should continually invoke him in prayer, and be always praising him for blessings. When we have that kind of fear, we may be sure that God will be faithful to us to the very end.

The fear Calvin describes doesnot refer to some feeling but a total commitment to always act in light of divine reality. In our home we have to have this kind of commitment in regard to dairy. You may

not know but our children have a severe milk allergy. This this sense we fear dairy It is not that we are scared of milk but that keep in mind this allergy in every product we buy and in every meal we make. Everywhere all the time.

This the kind of effect Calvin is describing. This holy fear of God magnifies him because it permeates all we do and are.

We have great reason to fear the Lord. God mercy is reserved for those who fear God. And we are utterly dependent on God's mercy.

What is the connection of the fear of the Lord and his mercy?

The more impressed you are by God's presence, the more you will understand the depth of the mercy God has shown you in Christ. You will stand before God some day but instead of being consumed in judgment you will be cherished as a Son. The gospel promise of forgiveness and mercy makes all the difference in what you think of standing before God. The greater your fear of God, the greater you will realize your sin and that you cannot stand before God. Then you will know the greatness of God's mercy that all who believe in him will have everlasting life in his presence.

God extends his merciful presence to those who fear him. Luke show us this principle at work in the Nativity. To Whom does

God send his angels I? Is it the great of world? Is it the wealthy? Is it their rulers or the religious leaders?

Rather it is those who God has given this holy fear. King Herod did not get to gaze on the Son of God. but the shepherds do. They who were filled with great fear at the angels.

Section 3: Magnify the glory of God in his works

Mary songs glorifies God in rejoicing and her holy fear and recounts two great descriptions of her reason for singing.

First she says-

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.

It seems to me that one of the few things most American can agree on is that we live in a time of great unrest. Now there maybe little agreement at the source of this turbulence, but few deny tumultuous times. And if we not careful these cares and consume us.

Mary shows us in these times we might be moved to praise God if we see the goodness of his providence. The direction of our society not random nor is it the product of some grand conspiracy.

It a product of God's providential unerring justice. God is executing his righteous judgement of sin on the earth. If we all lived as we were called the world would have continued as it was when God created it as a paradise. But that is not the world we live in now.

The Creator we fear has a mighty arm and the right to judge the earth. He needs no help in saving the humble or judging the proud. God sets up and scatters the rulers of this world like they are pieces on a game board. God raises up and God brings down

It is no surprise that Mary highlights God's opposition to the proud in this song. Instead of magnifying the glory of God the powers of be that magnify their own names. It often not easy to see God's hand in these kinds of calamities. But God has a good purpose.

See, Mary's song is not primarily one of justice but of praise to God for redemption even though it is invisible to the world. And that God Redeemer came without fanfare because he is hidden in the womb of a virgin. God's mercy and judgements in providence are cause for rejoicing.

The same mighty arm that drowned Pharoah delivered the Israelites. God's mercy and God's judgement. God has good purpose. God does not enjoy turning things upside down but he does enjoy feeding the hungry and exalting the humble. God makes displays his almighty arm when He makes the last first and the first last.

Movement 4: : Mafify God for his promises.

The power of God is a reason for our praise but Mary's song crescendos with one more reason to magnify our Lord. She says.

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

So while this salvation is a reversal of the world's expectations - it is also the fulfillment of all of his promises.

Our praise in God is built on the foundation of the promises of God. We cannot have true lasting joy in the Lord based on sentiment or some generic belief that God is good. Everyone talks about abstractly about God being good or believing God has something special in store for themselves.

We have something better than positive thinking or sentimentality. We have the promises of God.

We like Mary have hope in these promises because they are spoken to us as the spiritual offspring of Abraham. The grace promised more than a thousand years beforehand belonged to Mary and belongs to God's people in all nations. This is the foundation God laid for our praise. God makes promises and so we may magnify him when he brings them to pass.

Mary rejoices that God is visiting his people again to fulfill all he spoke the Abraham and all the prophets.

God did not forget his gracious promise that in the offspring of Abraham all nations of the world would be blest. Even though more than 1000 years had past since he made it.

God did not forget his promise that David would never lack a descendant on the throne, even though Israel was conquered by pagan nations.

Mary calls our attention to Abraham and the promises of the old covenant to emphasize the continuation of the God's unfolding plan of salvation. The coming of Christ is the great final chapter of the story God began in Genesis of how God is delivering his people. *This salvation makes God's people sing no matter our circumstances*

Reading a song so closely we can hear the individual notes but miss the melody. Mary sings rejoicing from her spirit because God is

merciful to those who fear him and his hand of providence works keeping all his promises. These are all the individual notes. Mary sings this magnum opus because Jesus is coming. God inspired this song to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ...

Jesus Christ born of Mary is Savior we rejoice in and the merciful God we fear. The dwelling of God with us did not begin with a royal decree or in an imperial palace. But it began unseen from the world in the womb of this singing virgin. The Son of God did not come for the righteous but seek and save that which is lost. He did not go to nobles but to the sinners.

The mighty arm of God was not shown in a great military victory or in ruling the empires of this world. No in fact the religious leaders of that day rejected Jesus Christ and conspired with the rulers to put him to death. This was the greatest reversal of the proud and humble. The proud men of that day killed the Son of God humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Like his birth God worked most powerfully when it was least visible.

This was no defeat but the climax of the salvation promised to Abraham to all who will believe these promises. The righteous One died in the place of the unrighteous so that they could sing a new song of deliverance.

Jesus offers abundant mercy to all who receive him as Savior and fear him as their Lord. So let us glorify God in joy and fear with angels declaring from our hearts “Glory to God in the Highest and On Earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”. Amen.