

# MARY'S SONG

## Luke 1:46-56

### INTRODUCTION

**Illustration** – In 2003 at The Shepherd's Conference, I taught a session titled, "**The Way of Salvation – God-Centered vs. Man-Centered Evangelism**" This is not the point today, except for the title. A logical question someone might ask is, what does it mean to be "God-centered"? There is no finer example than our passage today – **Mary's Song, The Magnificat.**

This is the second of five songs that appear in the first two chapters of Luke: **Elizabeth, Mary, Zacharias, Angels, and Simeon** - 1:42b-45, **46-55**, 68-79; 2:14, 29-32

What do we know about **Mary**?

What do we know about **Mary** from her own words?

She speaks three times in Scripture:

1. **Luke 2:48** – "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."
2. **John 2:3** – "when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.'"
3. **Luke 1:46-55** – 10 verses – Mary opens up a window into her soul

**Luke 6:45** - "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

There is no better way to learn about Mary than to hear what she speaks.

**READ Luke 1:46-56**

**Proposition:** Mary Praises God for 3 of His Perfections:

- I. His **Mercy**
- II. His **Might**
- III. His **Memory**

**So That:** You would magnify Jesus in your heart and before the world.

**1<sup>st</sup> Perfection** of God, ...

**I. The Mercy of God** **1:46-50**

Point – God’s Mercy is

- A. **Personal**
- B. **Universal**
- C. **Particular**

A. God’s Mercy is **Personal**

Proof – “<sup>46a</sup>**And Mary said,**”

**Elizabeth’s** words were excited and outpouring.

**Mary’s** are calm and measured

“<sup>46b</sup>**My soul exalts the Lord,**” – from the original Greek word μεγαλύνω which means to make great, extol, praise – literally enlarge, magnify

The same word is used in:

**Psa 34:3** – “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

**Mal 1:5** – “your eyes will see this and you will say, ‘The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!’”

**Acts 19:17** – “fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.” (miracles at Ephesus in Paul’s second missionary journey)

I like the ESV and KJV translations a little better here - “My soul magnifies the Lord.”

The word “**Magnificat**” comes from the first word of the Latin Vulgate translation, “*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*”

You might reasonably and wisely ask how can a creature enlarge its Creator? How can the finite magnify the infinite? If you know your math, infinity times anything is still infinity.

**Illustration**– D Martin Lloyd Jones said it is like a lens causing God to be larger to others or to make others see Him more clearly.

present tense → Mary’s continuous action of praise and exaltation

“<sup>47</sup>**and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.**” – the word translated as **rejoiced** here is the same root as “joy” in **v. 44** - exultation, extreme gladness, extreme joy – often with body movements such as jumping, smiling, and laughing

aorist tense → Perhaps when **Gabriel** brought the message

“**soul**” and “**spirit**” brings out the beautiful dimension(s) of man being made in the image of God → also lyrical/poetic beauty

“**in God my Savior**” – it is personal – **Isa 45:21** – “there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me.”

Mary is in need of the Savior – she was not born by immaculate conception – she is a sinner in need of a Savior

→ Mary is like **Elizabeth** [“my Lord” in v. 43]

**Illustration** – Remember the Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup commercial? Their advertising campaign was centered on the idea that when the chocolate comes together with the peanut butter, you have a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup.

When **Elizabeth** said, “my Lord.” and **Mary** says, “**my Savior.**” And you put those together: → Lordship Salvation

This doublet from Mary (“exalt” and “rejoice”) reminds us of the answer to **Question #1** of the **Westminster Catechism** – What is the chief end of man?

Answer: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever

Now Mary gives → the **reason why!!!**

“<sup>48a</sup>**For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave;”**

- From the Greek word ταπεινωσις → which was translated in French as *tapis* (carpet) → from which we get the English word *tapestry*
- Literally means something you trample upon

Proof –

**Hagar** → **Gen 16:11** – “Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.”

**Psa 136:23** – “Who remembered us in our low estate,”

**Acts 8:33** – “In humiliation His judgment was taken away;”

**Mary** is standing in the tradition of **Hannah** ...

**Turn to: 1 Sam 1:11, 18; 2:1-10**

Point – This is an outburst of praise mostly in Old Testament language → **Mary is saturated** with the Word of God

“<sup>48b</sup>**for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.**”

→ As beneficiary, not Benefactor;

as the recipient of blessing, not the Dispenser of Blessing;

→ **Mary** is the “**Blessee,**” not the “**Blesser**”

→ **Because** blessed is the fruit of her womb (42)

**Gen 30:13** – “**Leah** said, ‘Happy [Blessed] am I! For women will call me happy [blessed].’”

“<sup>49a</sup>**For the Mighty One has done great things for me;**”  
→ literally – “the Powerful One”

**Psa 50:1** – “The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken, and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.”

**Psa 71:19** – “Your righteousness, O God, *reaches* to the heavens, You who has done great things; O God, who is like You?”

Why will all the generations call her blessed??

Because Mary turns the attention where it belongs → to God.

“<sup>49b</sup>**and holy is His name**”

- He is separate from and exalted above the creature.
- All of His attributes are perfect, and they are all in perfect harmony of holiness.

## B. God’s Mercy is **Universal**

Point – “The Gospel is good news of mercy to the undeserving. The symbol of the religion of Jesus is the cross, not the scales.”

Proof – “<sup>50a</sup>**And His mercy is upon generation after generation**”

– compassion, *pity*, *sympathy*, *lovingkindness*, *faithfulness*

→ **1:50, 54, 58, 72, 78** – **Mary** twice, **Luke** once, **Zacharias** twice

**John Chrysostom** – “*Mercy is the highest art and the shield of those who practice it. It is the friend of God, standing always next to Him and freely blessing whatever He wishes ... It breaks chains, dispels darkness, extinguishes fire, kills the worm and takes away the gnashing of teeth. By it the gates of heaven open with the greatest of ease.*”

## C. God’s Mercy is **Particular**

Point – The mercy of God is holy, not promiscuous.

Proof – “<sup>50b</sup>**toward those who fear Him.**”

**Isa 57:15** – “thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, ‘I dwell *on* a high and holy place, and *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

**Illustration** – **Mary** models for us a heart of humility.

**Illustration** – **Mary** models for us an attitude of thankfulness.

**Mary** models for us a mind saturated with Scripture. When she needs to find words to express her heart of joy and thankfulness to God, her mind is overflowing with Scripture. And when she speaks out of the abundance of her heart, her mouth is filled with the language of Scripture.

This **personal, universal, and particular** outburst of praise follows **Psa 103:17** perfectly → “the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children,”

**Application** – **J. C. Ryle** – “*Let us rise from our beds every morning with a deep conviction that we are debtors and that every day we have more mercies than we deserve.*”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Perfection** of God, ...

**II.**      The **Might** of God                      **1:51-53**

Point – **Deut 32:39** – “See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal;” **1 Sam 2:6** – “The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.”

Point – God turns attitudes and orders of society upside down. He lifts up and brings down.

→ God lifts the lowly and lowers the lofty

Proof – “<sup>51</sup>**He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were proud* in the thoughts of their heart.** <sup>52</sup>**He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.** <sup>53</sup>**He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed.”**

Point – What God has done in the past  
51-54 – 7 times – “**He has ...**”

**Old Elizabeth** is the birth song of the new.  
**Young Mary** is the swan song of the old.

From **Elizabeth**, we have the first song of the new. Now from **Mary**, strangely and beautifully, we have the last song of the old.

Proof – “<sup>51a</sup>**He has done mighty deeds with His arm;**”

“**arm**” – describes the **power** of God – He uses His power to:

- Deliver, support, and uphold
- Scatter, bring down, and drive out

**Exod 6:6** – “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.”

**Acts 13:16-17** – “Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: <sup>17</sup>The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.’”

Point – God is our **Mighty Warrior**, our **Merciful Savior**, and our **Loving Father**.

→ He is not partial to the rich, the powerful, or the proud

Proof – “<sup>51b</sup>**He has scattered *those who were proud* in the thoughts of their heart.”**

“**proud**” – literally – to show oneself above others – this is the self-deluded love of self, wrapped in a ribbon of arrogance

**2 Tim 3:2** – “men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy”

“<sup>52a</sup>**He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones,**”

Point – The media, both social and mainstream, point to the secondary causes.

As Christians, we know that God is the Primary Cause.

**Illustration – 2 Chron 26: 1→15-16→21**

“<sup>52b</sup>**and has exalted those who were humble.**”

God lifts the lowly....

**Illustration** – From **Joseph** in Egypt to **Mary** in Nazareth  
...they have been exalted and used by God.

**Illustration – Theophilus**, as a ranking Roman official, is powerful and rich, BUT ... he is not proud!

**Application – 1 Pet 5:6** – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time”

“<sup>53a</sup>**He has filled the hungry with good things;**”

Now, it is true that **Joseph** and **Mary** were poor. They weren't beggars. But they were poor. When they present Jesus on the eighth day of his life to be circumcised, they offer the sacrifice of the poor of the nation, two young pigeons (**2:24**).

BUT the point here is → material and more importantly Spiritual!

**Psa 107:9** – “He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.”

**John 6:35** – “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’”

Notice it does not say, “He fed the hungry with good things.”  
The text reads, “**has filled the hungry with good things**”

God lowers the lofty....

“<sup>53b</sup>**and sent away the rich empty-handed.**”

**Point** – God doesn’t bring the **rich** and **powerful** down vindictively, but purposefully.

There is a judgment aspect to it, that they might be humbled in their heart to receive true riches and power.

**Illustration** – Now in your case, maybe it is money.

Maybe it is something else. Maybe it is sex, or a relationship, or your PhD, or club sports.

**Application**– We need to be two things: humble and hungry

If we lack humility, it makes it hard or even impossible to forgive. And it certainly makes it impossible to seek forgiveness. It makes it nigh impossible to consider others as more important than ourselves, ...

**Illustration** – Like the graffiti that was on the housing project–  
“Revolution! The only hope for the hopeless!”

**Application** – That is true, but what kind of revolution?? Mary is talking about a revolution of the heart. That is the entryway for God.

**Application** – Beloved, the danger is to become so concerned with the benefits that we forget the Benefactor, to be so concerned with the gifts, we forget the Giver.

### III. The Memory of God 1:54-56

Point – Might sound anticlimactic ... but ... His **Mindfulness**, His **Remembrance**

Point – God’s persistent patience to not wash His hands of a consistently wayward people.

**Psa 98:3** – “He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”

Proof – “<sup>54</sup>**He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, <sup>55</sup>as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.**”

“**given help**” – literally means – to take hold of to support

“**remembrance**” – If you want one word to best describe → **intervention** (protection, deliverance, rescue, mercy, kindness)

**Illustration – Gen 8:1a** – “But God remembered Noah”

**Gen 19:29** – “Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.”

**Illustration** – Childbirth – barren wombs

**Gen 30:22** – “Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.”

**1 Sam 1:19** – “Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.”

**Zacharias in v. 72** – “To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant”

**Illustration** - Charles Spurgeon's illustration of the pastor who went with the benevolence offering to the widow that was in arrears in her rent. He knocked on her door but there was no answer. He later found out that she was home so he asked why she didn't answer. She responded: "I thought you were the debt collector who came to evict he. I didn't know you were coming to pay my debt."

**Mercy, Might, and Memory** ... of every one of His promises

“<sup>56</sup>**And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.**”

Recall **v. 26** – sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy; apparently, she left right before John was born – **v. 57**

**G. Campbell Morgan** – “*She returns to her parent's home, still betrothed. She lived there for 6 months until the birth of her Lord. We have no account of these 6 months. But we know that she lived there in fellowship with the God of her fathers, more wonderfully than she had ever known. She was guarded from the bitterness of a town and the stupidity of its idle gossip by her loving husband Joseph. All the while she was building the body of Jesus.*”

Beloved, **Mary** gives expression with her lips to what is treasured in her heart – the Word of God.

## CONCLUSION

Do you notice what is utterly absent from Mary's Song? There is a one letter word you will not find in her Magnificat ... “I” [Note: Neither will you find the word, “I” in Elizabeth's Song]

**Mary** understands that while she is a very important cog ... a singularly unique cog ... she is nonetheless a very, very small cog in one extremely giant wheel/machine of God's plan of Redemption for Israel and for all peoples.

There is absolutely nothing about what she does or about what we do. It is all about God ... what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do.

The former is man-centered. The latter is God-centered. What is God-centered??? Simply put, the Gospel ☺

Out of the abundance of Mary's heart, her mouth speaks,