

MARY MAGNIFICAT

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Scripture: Luke 1:39-56

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Now at this time, Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, Luke is talking about a time soon after Mary heard from the angel that she was going to bear a son, and to call him Jesus – this wonderful announcement was made to her. She then asked, “How is this possible?” and the angel said, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the child conceived in you will be born of the Holy Spirit.” Then the angel ended by saying, “for nothing will be impossible with God,” to which Mary responded and said, “Behold the bond-servant of the Lord.”

and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. Now, if you remember, the angel also told Mary, “Do not be afraid Mary, you have. Found favor....” So now Mary is on her way. She enters the house of Zacharias and greets Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”

Then Mary said: and this is really her Magnificat!

“My soul exalts the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant;

For behold, from this time on, all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.

And His mercy is to generation after generation toward those who fear Him.

He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

And sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has given help to His servant Israel,

In remembrance of His mercy,

Just as He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.

What a magnificent song that has been penned by Luke under the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit. Shall we invite the same Holy Spirit to inspire our thoughts as we look at this passage?

Come, Holy Spirit, touch our hearts, our minds, our thought processes, and help us to extract from this beautiful passage, things that we too can join, as it were, with Mary in exalting the Almighty God who is our God as well. in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

We've looked at the initial part and know that this is Mary going and meeting Elizabeth and confirms what the angel said to her as she hears Elizabeth's words, the filling of the Holy Spirit of Elizabeth and the baby leaping in her womb, and all of those wonderful things. When we think about that line – Mary pondered all these things – you think whether these were the things that she pondered: What the angel said to her? What would happen to her? What would happen to this son? What would He do? "You should call his name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin." Then this wonderful confirmation as she comes to meet Elizabeth. The angel had said that Elizabeth was barren and in her old age, now is bearing a child. And this is what has happened – she's six months pregnant. Mary now comes and sees the confirmation of all that the angel has said to her.

Then she bursts into this magnificent song, popularly known as "The Magnificat" because of the Latin word 'magnify' that starts this particular song of Mary. And as I read it, I thought that all that Mary has said in this song is so true for you and me, for we too have a God who is awesome. We have a God who has done mighty things. We have a God who takes cognizance of where we are, in what kind of lowly estate or place that we are in. We have a God who remembers, a God who is merciful. All those are things that are for our own lives as well. I thought that we should dig a little deeper into this Magnificat and see what it was that Mary was talking about, and then apply it in our own lives. and at the end of it be able not just to say: This is Mary's Magnificat, but this is my Magnificat as well. This is my song of praise. I will exalt the Lord. my soul exalts the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. My prayer is that, at the end, we will be able to say: My soul exalts the Lord.

So let's mine this for what we can, in the time that we have and see how we can apply it to our lives. A few things as we look particularly from vs. 46 to 55.

1. God regards our humble state, or humble estate (KJV).

He regards, He sees, He knows where we are coming from. Mary understood that she was really at the bottom of the social ladder there. Her littleness basically is how the Greek puts it. She understood how little she was in this scheme of things in Israel, and yet, when she hears what God wants to do and how He wants to use her, she immediately acquiesces to what God is saying and asking. She says, "Let it be unto me. I am your slave. I'm your servant. I'm your bond servant."

As I thought of that, I thought: It's one thing to look at ourselves and say, "My goodness! I'm just nobody. I really don't have the resources. I don't have the talent. I don't have the gifts." Then, when God comes along and says, "I'm going to use you," we say, "No God! I am not worthy." And we are filled with this false sense of humility that prevents us from saying, "Lord, however, I know who I am and what I am and where I come from. But God, if You want to use me, then here I am. Use me."

Sometimes we need to get beyond the littleness that we may think of ourselves and say instead, "Lord, if You want to use me, unworthy though I am, Lord please do." Remember, God can use anyone and anything, and yet He comes to you and to me for purposes that we may never understand, and for things He sees in us that we may never know. But God does.

I'm reminded of the story of Balaam. God used the donkey to talk to Balaam and tell him things that he needed to hear. I love the song that Don Francisco wrote many, many years ago:

For when the Lord starts usin' you, don't you pay it any mind
He could have used the dog next door if He'd been so inclined.

So beloved, as we look at our own selves and we think: I am so unworthy; I am so low down in whatever spiritual hierarchy there might be in my mind; I am a nobody. When God taps you on the

heart and says, "I have a job for you," the proper response must be like Mary, to say, "Let it be unto me as you have said." God looks at our lowly estate and still says, "In my scheme of things, you're the one person who can do this thing. And I have picked you out of billions of people to do this one thing." He regards and He knows exactly where you and I are.

2. God does great things.

Mary said, "The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is His name." God found Mary in an obscure town called Nazareth. Why obscure? Because you remember when Jesus walked on earth, He met Philip and said, "Come, follow Me!" Philip went and met Nathaniel and said, "Listen! I found the one whom the prophets and the law of Moses talked about – Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph." And Nathaniel's response was, "What good can come out of Nazareth? And it is at Nazareth that God's eyes zeroed in and found Mary and said, "I can take you and do great things for you." As Mary is singing this song, I'm sure that she remembered all the great things that God had done, not only for her but in her family, and in her lineage, and in the history of Israel.

Great and mighty things that God had done! I wonder beloved, as you and I look at this passage, whether we can get beyond Mary and ask ourselves: What great things has God done in my life? What has He done? Do I remember those things? Maybe He's given you admission into a school or a college that you thought could never happen, and yet, that's where you are right now, or that's where you've been. Or maybe you've got a job that you thought was way beyond your reach or a connection or a partnership that you had never imagined could happen. Or maybe He's helped you overcome a circumstance you thought had finished you. Or maybe He's given you wisdom to navigate a difficult situation. Or maybe he's brought reconciliation after you had given up hope.

Great things, beloved, God has done in our lives! And if we would take the time to just look at our lives and say: Let me see those beautiful markers where God's amazing presence changed a situation so completely. It was a great thing that He did that changed my entire outlook on my life, or even the path that I was following. I think that when we do that, our response will be: My soul exalts the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.

3. He is merciful to those who fear Him.

The word 'mercy' - while it has the connotation or the understanding of fear in terms of a powerful entity that God is, omnipotent, can do anything, it also captures the whole idea of reverence and awe. That's what she has captured here, this reverence and awe for a God who is so merciful to His followers, to those who are obedient to Him.

I'm sure that Mary was remembering her Jewish history again where Israel flourished as long as they revered and worshipped and served and feared God. Every time they went away, that was the time they realized that God wasn't with them. To come back they had to once again get into that relationship of worship and reverence and awe and fear; not in a negative sense but in a positive sense that He's so powerful that He becomes so fierce. They had seen that many times in their history.

I once wrote an article entitled "Have We Lost The Awe?" Have we? When we look at our lives, are we still reverential to Him? Do we still revere Him? Do we still worship Him in truth? do we acknowledge His presence in our lives? Do we give Him the place of highest honor? Have we lost the awe? Because God is worthy of our reverence. A God to be feared, but a God to be revered because of who He is.

4. He has done mighty deeds with His arm.

He has done great things for us, but He has also done mighty things – things that involve great power, miraculous things. What was Mary remembering? I'm sure that she remembered hearing stories of how God had brought them out of Egypt, how He had divided the Red Sea for them to walk through, how He had brought down the walls of Jericho, how He had fed them manna in the wilderness. Great and mighty things that God had done! Then not just as part of her history, but when her eyes locked with Elizabeth's eyes, she realized that this was another mighty thing that God had done – a mighty thing not only in Elizabeth, but within her too.

He has done mighty things with His arm. This begs the question of you and me: What mighty thing has He done in your life that can make you exalt Him this morning? Maybe, you remember when you were between a rock and a hard place, and every option had petered out and every door had closed. And all you had were a group of praying saints who were storming heaven's doors for you. And then God came through. God came through and overturned that potential catastrophe, or brought a miraculous intervention, or brought you out of the jaws of death itself.

Or maybe you're saying: I don't remember any mighty deeds that God has done. That's a very sad place to be, because God continues to do mighty deeds in our lives, but they are directly proportionate to the trust that we place in Him. And maybe today is an opportunity for you to stop trying to play it safe. Like I said many times before, "Let go, Let God!" Let God take the reins and show you what mighty things He can do if He is in the driver's seat. Trust is the one thing that God wants because it shows our dependence on Him. Maybe today, you need to go out on a limb and say, "I'm going to trust Him. I don't know how to navigate this time, and I'm just playing it safe, just meandering through life." Maybe God is saying: It's time you stepped out of the boat. It's time you trusted Me. It's time you went out on a limb. It's time you stopped looking at your own feeble resources and trusted the God of heaven and see what mighty things I can do for you. Maybe today could be a red-letter day for you as you do that.

The song says, "Great and mighty is the Lord, our God." Truly great things He has done; mighty things He has done, and my soul exalts in the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

5. He has exalted those who are humble.

It's easy for us to see humility around us, to see it modelled in humble people. And yet, it's the most difficult thing to say, "I'm going to go after humility." Because, like I've said to you before, humility is a strange attribute; just when you think you have it, you've lost it. So, I think the better place for us would be to say: What would be the opposite? Let's make sure that the opposite is not in my life. What would be the opposite? Pride. Pride is what makes us take our eyes off our Provider. Pride is a sin because of its self-centered rather than God-centered perspective on life. We often find ourselves inordinately proud of what we have accomplished, and who we are. In turn, we don't give thanks to the Lord, our true source of strength, for He is the One who gave us these abilities and opportunities for the purpose of growing His kingdom. This song says that He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has scattered the proud.

I wonder whether we need to pause there for a minute and ask the question: Do I depend on God? Do I acknowledge that God is the one who has done things in my life? Or am I saying that I'm the one who has done all of this? Have we, by any chance, got conceited and begun to think that everything that has happened is because of me, and forgotten that every good and perfect thing comes from God Himself. Maybe as we go towards the table of the Lord, and we find that there are things that we may have become too proud or conceited, where my ego is in play – this will definitely be able to tell me that I am not being humble, and humility is not in me.

6. He has filled the hungry with good things.

Mary is actually quoting Psalm 107:9, which also says how spiritually mature she was herself, for she knew the psalms. Ps. 107:9 says: "For He has satisfied the thirsty soul and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good."

Mary is not talking about physical hunger, but of a spiritual hunger. Only those who are hungry can be filled. Only if you are hungry is there room for a filling. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Martin Lloyd Jones, commenting on this particular verse said this: "I do not know of a better test that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession than a verse like this. If this verse is to you one of the most blessed statements of the whole of scripture, you can be quite certain you are a Christian. If it is not, then you had better examine the foundations again."

Powerful words! Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and it is God who fills those who are hungry with good things. Are you spiritually hungry this morning? Are you consistently saying: God give me, fill me with spiritual things? Nourish me Lord, with things that will help me to grow and be more the kind of person that you want me to be. Help me to be righteous. For that we need to be hungry.

7. He has remembered to be merciful.

He has given help to Israel, His servant, in remembrance of His mercy as He spoke to our fathers. Is God a merciful God? You'd better believe that He is. That's a statement that cannot be refuted. He is mercy personified.

Hebrews 4:16 *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

Titus 3:5 *"He saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."*

Luke 1:77 *"To give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven."*

The Bible tells us that while we were yet sinners, Christ Jesus died for us, and yet God in His mercy offered us grace. Without it we would face condemnation and death and eternal separation from Him. A God who gives us mercy, treats us mercifully.

Ephesians 2:8 *"For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast."*

He continues to be merciful. Even beyond giving us salvation, He treats us mercifully. For we continue to fall into sin, and it is in mercy that He forgives us. With mercy that He shows us the path that we need to take when we are going down a path that is not right. A merciful God!

Words of Caution.

So, that's the Magnificat! But before we leave these points and conclude this beautiful song, we must pay attention to words of caution as well. Mary talks about two things: pride and riches in a negative sense. We've already looked at pride. But what about riches? For it says that the rich He has sent empty away. Why? What is the issue here? It correlates directly with being hungry. For it says, "He has filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty-handed." In other words, if we are rich then there's the potential for us to lose our dependency on Him and not be as hungry for Him as we once were. Maybe before we had what it took to take care of ourselves and our families, before we had all the resources that we can now call up, we used to be more dependent on God. We used to turn to Him for our daily bread. Turn to Him for wisdom; turn to Him for knowledge of a situation; turn to Him when things got difficult. Now maybe we're not so hungry

for Him. The bible is saying that's the downside of having riches – that we take our eyes off the Lord and we begin to trust in those resources and the hunger for God goes away.

A good word for us. Even as we look at all the positive things that we have seen about God, we need to ask ourselves: Have I lost my dependency on God? Am I proud? Am I now quite content with all that I have that I don't seek God like I used to? Am I not hungry for Him anymore? The bible says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Then to realize, as we see in 1 Chronicles, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows."

1 Timothy 6:17 "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."

So, a word for us even as we look at these glorious things that must lift our spirits and say, "We exalt God today. Our spirit rejoices in God who is my Savior." Not to forget about pride and riches. Don't let riches take away your hunger for God.

For all these amazing things that God has done for us and the amazing future that Jesus has purchased for us, let us, through His Spirit, exalt the God of our salvation, the God who brings hope to the hopeless, love to the unloved, joy to the joyless, comfort to those who are sad and grieving and peace to the ones whose hearts are in turmoil. To this God let us say: My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Amen.