

The Song of Mary

Advent Midweek #3 – 12/18/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 1:46-56 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 47, Mary sings, “...my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,”

v. 50, “**And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.**”

Introduction

- ⌘ When Mary sings her song of praise, immediately after the John the Baptizer – still in Elizabeth’s womb – has confirmed that the baby growing in Mary’s womb is the promised Christ Child, she doesn’t sing an entirely original song. You heard me right. It’s a good thing there were no copyright rules back then, because the words of Mary’s famous song, what we call the Magnificat today, are largely derived from a song sung about a thousand years earlier; a song proclaimed by Hannah, the mother of Samuel.
- ⌘ It’s really quite an interesting choice. As the Magnificat shows, Mary clearly wanted to focus on the promised justice of the Christ; how her Son is coming to turn things upside down, and inside out from the way they were before that day. A major part of Jesus’ role would be to give to those who have nothing and take away everything from the wicked and manipulative.
 - ➔ In light of that, there were plenty of other songs from the Old Testament that she could have adapted for her own song of praise. She could have sung a variation on the Song of Moses – the boasting, jubilant words the Israelites sang after watching the Lord drown the armies of Pharaoh. She could have sung a variation on one of the psalms or a section of the Prophets as they also proclaimed the wonders of the Lord who was going to tear down the mighty and lift up the lowly.
- ⌘ So, why would Mary choose to sing her song from the Song of Hannah?

I. A Song Rooted in Deep Humility

- ⌘ Well, one connection between the two women is of course the fact that Hannah was also a barren woman singing her song in praise for how the Lord had opened her womb. So in both cases these are women filled with joy and responding to a miraculous pregnancy.
 - ➔ But perhaps more important, Hannah’s song of praise is deeply personal. For years, her husband’s other wife Peninnah had mocked and ridiculed Hannah for her barrenness. So when Hannah sings about God impoverishing the rich and enriching the poor; when she sings about those who are full going hungry and the hungry being filled, she’s not just coming up with words to which she cannot relate.
 - ➔ Listen again to what Hannah sang: “My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD ... because I rejoice in Your salvation. ... Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ... The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and He exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust ... to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor” (1 Sam 2:1b, 5, 7–8).
- ⌘ You see, Hannah is singing about her own personal enemy; the one right there in her little town, the one who’s been tormenting her over a conflict that most people will never know. Hannah is saying publicly that, yes, her God is the one who pours out mercy on entire nations. But He is also the God who gives salvation and victory to individuals; to those unknown and insignificant in the eyes of many.

→ And the more you or I feel like that kind of person, the more we sing the song of despair; the lament of the worthless. Many of us have been there in life, haven't we? Those people who are supposed to love you, have lost interest and seem to care nothing about you now. They don't understand your troubles, and they absolutely don't want to be burdened with them. They just keep their distance from you; making you feel invisible or like you have a deadly, contagious disease.

→ You'd like to leave a legacy behind you in your life – we all would, but it seems like all of your work and effort doesn't seem to matter. Those accomplishments you're so proud of don't seem important to anyone else. And so, you worry that the world is just going to forget you the next moment after you are gone.

✘ Then, when you look at all of your sins, you can't imagine how things could be any different with God. You sing the song of despair. "Why would God ever love me? Why would He notice me? Why would He keep room in His mind and heart for someone like me; someone who keeps going back to the same transgressions over and over again? Why would God remember me when I can't seem to remember my promise to follow Him for more than five minutes?"

→ "I mean, look at me: I give in to anger and bitterness all the time. I keep returning to laziness, to greed, to lust, and to jealousy. I've accomplished nothing and thrown away everything I've been given. Sure, God is the God of all nations. He's the God of kings and prophets and apostles. But why should I ever expect Him to come near to me; to care about me?"

II. God's Promise to Come Near and Save

✘ But my dear Christian, you should expect it, because Mary, the mother of our Lord, told you He would.

→ She promised us this when she sang her own version of Hannah's song of praise: "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 He who is mighty has done great things for me. ... His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. ... He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things" (vv. 46–53).

✘ Just think of the implications of that song, folks. What Mary sings, means that your God is not just the God of big broad groups or world-famous or influential figures. He is the God of weeping women with barren wombs; the God of unknown maidens from backwater hick towns; the God who sent His Son to find you personally; to forgive you personally; and to save you personally.

→ And at the cross, that is precisely what Jesus did, fulfilling everything that His mother sang about Him. There at Calvary, the Mighty One did indeed do great things for her and for you by surrendering His might; by being betrayed and crucified; by allowing men to spill the blood He would use to forgive your sins and make you worthy of eternal life.

→ Yet at that same cross, Jesus also showed His extreme strength by placing His foot on the devil's head until that serpent's skull cracked into pieces, which then set you free from the condemnation that sin and Satan was pumping into your veins.

→ Yes, it is there at the cross, as Christ thirsted, that He filled your hungry soul with good things; that He fed you with the bread of life; with the salvation that He told Abraham would come to all those who believe His Word.

- ✘ All of this is what God gave to Mary through the child He miraculously conceived within her womb. All of this is what God gives to you and me – here and now – through that same child, named Jesus.
 - ➔ There at Calvary, your Lord was not merely the Savior of nations or big groups or seas of people. He wasn't just the Savior of people whose names will live on as pillars in the annals of human history. No, He was the Savior of the forgotten; the Savior of the never-known as well.
 - ➔ I know you may not want to admit this, but as far as I can tell right now, there is a high probability that in a couple hundred years or so, none of us here in this room will still be remembered or talked about at all – that is here on earth.
 - ➔ But rest assured my fellow baptized believers, because I can give you this guarantee right here tonight: The baby of whom Mary sang 2000 years ago - He was; is; and will forever be your personal Savior, not only in 200 years, but forever! He's the one who ripped you out of the devil's hands at your baptism and placed you lovingly, yet firmly into the arms of God the Father who will always love you; always cherish you; always call you personally by your name as His beloved child.
- ✘ Every one of these truths – or at least the basic principles without the details that had not yet happened in Mary's day, are what flooded into and through her very soul there with Elizabeth as she began to sing.
 - ➔ She sang, "My soul magnifies the Lord..." in verse 46. The Greek word for "soul" is pseekā (ψυχή), which refers to the place that the Greeks believed was "the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, and the very essence of life itself." So Mary is saying that ever single cell of her being – physically, emotionally and spiritually is so overcome by God's love and grace that all she can think to do is "magnify" Him in every aspect of her existence!

Conclusion

- ✘ Dearly beloved, I pray with all of my soul; all of my pseekā (ψυχή) here tonight, that you likewise may be impacted by God's incomprehensible gift of Jesus as He has come near to you in faith as well.
 - ➔ Just think of all that you've received. With Jesus' song of forgiveness; with His song of victory over the grave, Jesus silences your song of despair, hopelessness and unworthiness too.
 - ➔ In fact, He has now given you the right and the joy to join in with the song that Hannah and His mother sang; to sing as well this magnificent song that proclaims the mercy of our loving, compassionate and saving God. He is the One who has filled the hungry with good things; has cast the mighty from their thrones; and welcomes you into His kingdom, today and forevermore. Amen.