

Mary's Song: The Magnificat 12-15-19 Luke 1:39-56

Today we will turn our attention to the story of the central character of Christmas, who is Jesus, and to his leading lady, the blessed Mary. Luke 1: 39-56

Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. ⁴⁹For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. ⁵⁰AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. ⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. ⁵³HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; and sent away the rich empty-handed. ⁵⁴He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever." ⁵⁶And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.

Verses 46-55 form the hymn of Mary, known as the Magnificat. Now, *magnificat* is Latin, and this hymn goes by that name because the first word in the Latin text of verse 46 is *magnificata*. The King James Version translates it *My soul doth magnify the Lord*. The word means “magnify” or “exalt” and Mary exalts her Lord in this great hymn that contains some great stuff. Let’s sum up the thoughts in this hymn by this - Mary magnifies God because God exalts the humble. There are two key words from that proposition upon which to build our thoughts and applications today: the word “exalts” and the word “humble.” We’ll start by considering the latter as we build on the main idea that God exalts the humble.

Well, who are the humble? This passage helps us understand humility thru the example of humble Mary. Three thoughts about the humble. #1 – The humble are those who are needy and know it. Mary was like this. She refers to God as her Savior. The idea of a Savior assumes you need saving, right? Mary, like you and like me was a sinner in need of a Savior. In verse 48 she refers to her humble or lowly estate. She is in a position of need. And in verse 53 she refers to the humble as the hungry. When you are hungry you feel your need don’t you?

Now you may know the Bible tells us that every man and woman is needy. Everyone is born lost, sinful, under the curse, without hope. We’re all needy, desperately so but not all of us know it. The

humble man has a deep sense of his need, of his dependence. He feels spiritually what the hungry man feels physically - a desperate sense of need. But the proud (and we are all naturally proud), the proud man is OK. He's not hungry, he's satisfied. Jesus deals harshly in Revelation 3 with a proud church. In Revelation 3:17a *Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing."* This is the opinion of self. No needs. Jesus says, 17b *"and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."* They said, "We're wealthy." He said, "You're wretched." They said, "We're happy." He said, "You're miserable." They said, "We understand." He said, "You're blind." 18 *I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.* Before anyone will ever seek help from Christ they've gotta admit, "I'm a sinner in need of help." But God exalts the humble and the humble man admits his need. He doesn't come to God saying, "Here I am. Bet you're glad I'm on your side, aren't you God?" Far from it. He comes as a poor, helpless beggar. He is needy and knows it.

For the man without needs I can offer no hope. Christ came for the needy only. Luke 5:31-32 *Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* The Savior didn't come for righteous men, did He? If you are applying to Jesus and under the question, "Why should I accept you?" You start listing your virtues, you'll be turned away as overqualified. The only qualification you need to have Christ's love is to claim no qualifications at all. The Church of Christ is the only club in the world that requires it's members to be unworthy of membership. But you apply to Christ as a satisfied man - what happens? Verse 53 says He sends away the rich empty-handed. What a surprise! These proud, self-sufficient folks probably thought Jesus would come out to them; they are so respectable! They are accustomed to be run after, and they are astonished Jesus Christ does not bow down and thank them for patronizing Him. Instead He sends them away empty. After all, He has nothing for them.

The humble man, on the other hand, knows his needs and because he does, he is willing to accept help. And that is a very important point. The Bible says we are saved by what? Five letters, rhymes with *face*. Grace! Are you willing to accept grace? Pride says, "no." The proud American stands on his own two feet - independent, he says, "no handouts for me." The proud don't seek help - not from God, not from man. Just picture the drunken man coming from a party insisting he can drive

home. He fails to see his great need. Even worse is the sinner who stands before His judge and says, "I don't need a Savior."

Dear friends, there is no righteousness and certainly no wisdom in refusing grace. The humble man is able to acknowledge his need and accept help - help from God, help from men. The humble man doesn't try to bear his burdens alone. He seeks, he welcomes help from others whether that help comes as loving advice or a shoulder to cry on. He or she is willing to accept financial aid when that is needed. God calls us to be responsible and provide for ourselves, but occasionally you may find yourself in need. Don't be too proud to admit it. Man, we are saved by grace. We live by grace. We ought to be used to it by now. Is there something in your life for which you need help, but have not been willing to admit it, have not been willing to humble yourself and ask?

Also, the humble man, because he knows he is needy, wants to be taught. Teachableness is such a precious thing. Humble people are just so eager to learn because they know they are so needy of wisdom. The humble man brings his wisdom tank to God's station and says, "Fill 'er up, please." This is the man who is blessed by God.

The second mark of humble people is that they think about their duties more than their rights. Mary, of course, refers to herself as God's bonds slave, and a bonds slave has no entitlements really, only duties and privileges. Mary equates, in verse 50, those who fear God with the humble. And fearing God means your chief concern is to please Him. You dare not offend - so you are most interested in doing His will. Some however display an entitlement mentality and focus on how they are being treated as opposed to concentrating on their duties and how they are trying to meet them. For Christians, ours are delightful duties because of the loveliness of the one we serve. But that servant spirit is humility and God exalts such men and women. In I Kings 3 God appears to Solomon 5 *In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish me to give you."* We dream of this happening. Now listen 6-7 *Then Solomon said, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. ⁷Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in."* What is Solomon saying? I have need 8-9 *Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge*

Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours? Solomon doesn't ask for self. His concern is to do his work well and be a just king for God's people. **10-13** *It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, ¹²behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. ¹³I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days."* Solomon made a humble request and God honored that man above all others. Why? He focused on what God appointed Him to do for others and not on his personal prosperity.

The greatest example of this is our Lord Jesus. He is the perfect model of humility. Paul writes in Philippians 2:**3-7** *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Jesus would not cling to His rights and He really had them. He relinquished them and focused on what? **8a** *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient. His concern was the Father's will. And how dedicated was he to that? **8bc** He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Did God exalt Him? You bet **9** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. Our Master focused on duty not rights. That's so important in marriage isn't it? Someone said that in marriage if you start demanding your rights you might get some lefts thrown in as well. But the humble man doesn't ask, "What can you do for me?" But, "how can I better serve you?"**

The third mark of humble people is that they exalt the Lord. Of course, this is what humble Mary's hymn is all about. **46-47** *Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."* She points to him as her Savior. **49** *For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. All credit belongs to God. He alone is holy. **51a** He has done mighty deeds with His arm. The Shorter Catechism says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him*

forever.” This is an echo of what Mary has said isn’t it? **46,47** *“My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”*

So, the humble man or woman exalts the Lord and surely this means drawing attention, not to self but to Christ. Some would have us exalt Mary. She would turn our attention to her Lord. Let’s make sure we do that. A while back I heard a radio show that played Sandy Patty singing the song, “We Shall Behold Him.” How many of you have heard her sing that song? It is stunning. One of my faves. She sings about the magnificence of our Lord and how glorious will be His appearing. It is a tremendously Christ-exalting song and I was listening to it, just praising the Lord in my spirit. But when the song was over the radio announcer says, (are you ready?) *Isn’t she something!* I couldn’t believe it. This girl sings her lungs out to honor Christ, to tell how great He is and the response is, *Isn’t she something!*”

Well, succeed or not, we should try to turn all eyes to Christ and exalt Him. John Calvin says this is why he emphasized the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. He wrote that his only goal in teaching it was to “subdue to pride of the human spirit and to teach it to reverence, in all fear and humility, the majesty of God.” Calvin demonstrated this concern in all of life. No one can visit his grave today to pay homage because, at his request, there is no grave marker at all. Walter Chantry, wrote this: “The true test of your Calvinism (and I would say Christianity) comes just here. How low is self and how high is God in your heart?” Are you willing to be a nobody to exalt Christ? Are you willing even to risk looking foolish if it exalts the Lord? Sometimes that’s what it means. The Christian is humble because he has given up seeking praise for Himself in order to adore and exalt the one who alone is worthy.

Remember our main proposition? Humble yourself because God exalts the humble. We’ve looked at the first key word, the word “humble.” Now, I want to consider the word “exalt.” God exalts the humble in two ways: First of all, He satisfies them. Mary equates the humble with the hungry and says **53,54a** *HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; and sent away the rich empty-handed.* ⁵⁴*He has given help to Israel His servant.* The hungry, God says, those who have need and know it, are filled. In the Beatitudes Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they” - what? They shall be satisfied. And the spiritually hungry are not satisfied with ceremonies. A crying child may stop if you hand him a toy, but if he’s hungry he’ll throw the toy away. Only food will satisfy. Spurgeon says of the spiritually hungry *They must have food to eat. They will not be put off without it. They cry until they get it, and hence they do get it,*

for God hears their cry and grants their request. If a man's prayer be of such a character that only sovereign grace, real pardon, and true salvation will content his soul, then he shall not be put off with anything else, but he shall have that for which his soul craves. Such a man prays, with one of our hymn-writers:

*Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear, my requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry; give me Christ, or else I die.*

*Lord, deny me what Thou wilt, only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at thy feet I lie, give me Christ, or else I die.*

*Thou hast promised to forgive all who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie; give me Christ, or else I die. (52:615)*

This is the plea of the hungry humble man and God does answer beautifully, Newton wrote, “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved.” Change “fear” to “hunger.” “Twas grace that taught my heart to hunger and grace my hunger relieved.” So says Mary, so says Newton. Believe it. God satisfies the humble. That’s why I want hungry people in our church. Brothers and sisters who know that we have need and crave God’s provision to fill our emptiness. God will grant His spirit to those who are not satisfied without Him.

God satisfies the humble and hungry, but not the proud. Luke 1:53b *He sent away the rich empty-handed.* I Peter 5:5 *Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* The most miserable people in the world are the proudest. They need help, but refuse it. They need people but they drive them away. They need God but worship only self. They will not be satisfied.

Our last point today is this: God exalts the humble by honoring him. 48 *He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed* 52 *He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.* These are the ways of our God. James 4:10 *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and he will exalt you.* Man, if we could get this into our head, what a difference it would make! Who really is the blessed man? God does not exalt the proud. If a man exalts God, God exalts the man. And of all men, who is most exalted? Who is most honored? Who gets the biggest holiday in His honor? The One who was the servant of all - our Example and our Lord.

Let’s face it people, the values of Jesus Christ are virtually opposite those of the world. As Christ taught about the kingdom of God, He showed that status in God’s eyes is based on

completely different standards. He said Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And who is the greatest? Matthew 18:4 *Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew 19:30 *But many who are first will be last; and the last first.* Matthew 20:16 *Thus the last shall be first, and the first last.* Matthew 20:26-28 *Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.* These are the values of God's kingdom and they are radical. What is greatness in God's kingdom? Humility. Admitting your need, focusing on duties, exalting the Lord. The beginning of greatness is to be little; the increase of greatness is to be less, and the perfection of greatness is to be nothing.

Some of you right now have decisions to make. May I recommend the humble road? Listen, you humble yourself and God will bless. Swallowing your pride won't ever lead to indigestion. God will honor you. It may be only in glory where you will experience the honor, but God promises it will come and be worth the wait. I Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time.* Whenever. God's word is sure and there is no other way for exaltation than thru the door of humility. So, we end on the promise of God to those willing to be least, last, and humble. He says, "I will satisfy and I will honor." Because we typically demand honor "my way" and "right now" we will never find much traffic on humility highway. Most will get off at the exit of *admitting need*, some at the exit of *claiming rights*, still more at the exit of *exalting self*. But for those who press on, who take the humble way all the way, God holds out His blessings, His honor. May God help us to trust Him.