

“Mary’s Advent Song of Praise”

(Luke 1:46-55 – Midweek Advent – December 4, 2024)

Luke 1:46-55 – ⁴⁶And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. ⁴⁹For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. ⁵⁰And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵²He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, ⁵⁵as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus, who has regarded our lowly state and come as our Savior:

There was a lot for Mary to be joyful about. She had been used to a slow-paced life in the tiny village of Nazareth. It was hardly the place for earth-shaking news. But lately, Mary’s life had become exciting with her betrothal to Joseph. According to Jewish custom, Mary was probably a young teenager when she and Joseph made their vows. And now, though bound in marriage for life, they were in their waiting period before coming to live together under one roof and consummating marriage.

Yes, it had been exciting times. But then, things had gotten much more exciting! One day as Mary was going about life as usual, suddenly the angel Gabriel appeared to her with a message from God. She had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, whose coming God’s people had waited for, generation upon generation. The angel told Mary: “‘Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” We can imagine Mary’s excitement and wonder, as she responded in faith: “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:31-35, 38).

The excitement was too much to keep to herself. This truly was earthshaking news! The Savior of the world was to be born, the King of heaven was coming to

establish His Kingdom – and she was to be His mother! Now the angel also told Mary that her relative Elizabeth, who had never been able to have children even to old age, had now conceived with her husband Zacharias and was in her sixth month. Who better could Mary share the joy and excitement with; who could better understand the wonders of God in bringing His plans to fulfillment?

As we come to our text, Mary has journeyed to Elizabeth’s home. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. That six-month-old infant would become John the Baptist. Already in the womb, the forerunner of Christ could not contain his excitement and joy at the Savior’s coming. Neither could Elizabeth. She was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed to Mary: *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”* By revelation of the Spirit, Elizabeth knew the baby in Mary’s womb was the Messiah. Mary was to be the mother of God in our flesh! Elizabeth rejoiced in the wonderful plans of God coming to pass, as she told Mary: *“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”* (Luke 1:39-45).

It is at this point that Mary breaks forth in her Advent Song of Praise: *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name”* (vs. 46-49).

Mary acknowledges how greatly blessed she is to be chosen for this high calling. She is the one of whom God’s prophet had spoken in Isaiah 7:14: *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (“God with us”). What a privilege to be called the mother of God, who would be born of her flesh!

But in this, Mary claims nothing for herself deserving this honor. God had chosen her by grace alone, out of her lowly state as a no-name young maiden living in a no-name tiny village. God had chosen her to be His instrument in bringing forth the Savior of the world!

Moreover, Mary acknowledges that she herself needs the salvation He brings. As she says: *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”* As prophesied, the Messiah would be born as the Savior of sinners; and this included Mary. Unlike the false Roman Catholic teaching of the “Immaculate Conception,” Mary was not conceived and born without original sin. Like every child of Adam, she too inherited the sinful nature and sinned; so death would come to her as to all.

This is why, in all her excitement and joy, Mary's focus is on the grace of God alone, to whom she gives all the glory in sending the Messiah as her own Savior.

Today we join Mary's excitement and joy. For in the same way, God has chosen us by grace alone. He has called us out of our lowly state as no-name sinners, who had no place in His Kingdom. Our sin-corrupted nature would have caused us to be banished from His holy presence forever; our sins would have weighed us down to hell. But God in His mercy sent His Son to fulfill His promises to us as our Savior. As the Holy One born of Mary, Jesus lived the sinless life through which God counts us holy. As the innocent Son, Jesus went to the cross to die for our guilt, to save us from the wages of sin which is eternal death. As God in our flesh, Jesus also rose from the grave as the one who has conquered death to give us eternal life.

Now by His Holy Spirit God has conceived faith in our hearts. In a spiritual sense, we bear the Lord Jesus within us. As those whom God has called to be His children, and heirs of His eternal Kingdom in Christ, what a high calling He gives each of us. We are privileged to bring forth the Savior into the world, as we share His Good News of salvation with those around us in our own God-given callings.

This is the spirit of Mary's song of praise. As her soul magnifies the Lord and rejoices in her Savior, she shifts the focus from what great things God had done for her; and she proclaims the Good News that God extends to all in Christ: "*And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation*" (vs. 50). This includes all who hear the Word of God, and by His Holy Spirit repent of their sins, and believe His promise of salvation in Christ.

How often, from generation to generation, God had shown His faithfulness to His promises, and His strength in saving His people. As Mary testifies: "*He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever*" (vs. 51-55

Here Mary expresses the Scriptural theme of God's "great reversal" in bringing His salvation and Kingdom to the least expected. From generation to generation in Israel, the people had seen God put down the proud mighty from their thrones and exalted the humble and lowly who put their trust in Him. They had seen the mighty hand of God deliver them from enemies too powerful for them.

We think of the time God showed the strength of His arm, delivering His people from captivity in Egypt. He scattered the proud imagination of Pharaoh's heart, as He brought His people safely through the Red Sea but drowned the Egyptian army. And when Joshua led the people into Canaan, they saw that the battle belonged to the Lord, who conquered their enemies and gave them the Promised Land. Later, the Lord worked His strength through judges like Gideon, conquering a great Midianite army with just 300 men. Again, when the Assyrian king besieged Jerusalem with his vast army and things appeared hopeless, the angel of the Lord wiped out all his men and sent the proud away empty. When the Babylonians rose to power, even in captivity God's people saw Him put down proud kings like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; at the same time, He lifted up godly men like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who did not bow the golden image; and Daniel, who prophesied the coming Kingdom of the Son of Man, which would rise above every kingdom on earth as an everlasting Kingdom.

At last, in the fullness of time, when God sent His Son to be born of Mary, He conquered that enemy, Satan. The evil foe was much too powerful for us; he held us in his captivity by sin. But Jesus scattered the proud imagination of Satan as He went to the cross for us. By His death and resurrection, Jesus redeemed us from sin, Satan, and death. He brought us out of that kingdom of darkness and through the Red Sea of Baptism, drowning our foes behind us. By the grace of God, through faith in Jesus, we belong to the eternal Kingdom He came to establish for us.

What great things God has done for us! We bow in lowliness before the Lord, hungering for His righteousness, and He fills us with good things. He lifts us up in His forgiveness and crowns us with His righteousness! We humble ourselves in poverty of spirit before Him, claiming nothing for ourselves; and He exalts us as His royal children and heirs of all the riches of His heavenly Kingdom!

Therefore, we join the excitement and joy of God's people through the ages, "*Abraham and his seed forever*," welcoming the Lord Jesus by faith. We join Mary's Advent Song of Praise, as we proclaim what great things God has done for us, and as we share the Good News of the Savior who was born for all people.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.