

Luke 1:46-55 - EHV

Then Mary said,

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ because he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm.

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

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the lowly.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy,

⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.

Dear children of God who wait for the coming of our Savior,

Whether they were actually sung or chanted or just spoken is immaterial, but did you know that within the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke are three different songs, or hymns? I'm going to give you a few seconds to think if you can name them. Here's a hint: All of them have to do with the Advent and Christmas season. What did you come up with? In their proper order, they are:

1. **The Song of Mary**
2. **The Song of Zechariah**, the father of John the Baptist, upon the birth of his son
3. **The Song of Simeon**, the elderly believer who was promised he would not die before seeing the Savior. Holding the baby Jesus in his arms he spoke of how he could now depart in peace.

For our Midweek Advent Series this year, we will be looking at these three songs. Our text for today is the first of these songs – The Song of Mary. In some ways we might consider it to be the very first Christmas carol. It was composed and delivered by a young teenage mother who was looking forward to having her first child. This young woman, of course, was Mary, and her song was a response to the fact that she was carrying within her body at that very moment Immanuel – God made flesh. As we begin our Midweek Advent services to help us prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus' birth, it is our privilege to consider this hymn for our joy and the strengthening of our faith. As we do, what we'll find is that

**THEME: The Songs of Advent – The Song of Mary
“Mary’s Song Prepares Us For Mary’s Son”**

Using an approach we're quite familiar with, we'll proceed by dividing Mary's Song into four stanzas, looking at what each one has to tell us as we prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth. The opening portion of our text sets the background for Mary's Song. There we are given the following information:

Shortly after the angel Gabriel informed Mary that she was going to be the mother of Jesus – an event called “The Annunciation” – Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth with this amazing news. Gabriel had also alerted Mary to the fact that Elizabeth had some amazing news of her own: she and her husband, in their old age, were also going to have a child whom we know as John the Baptist. When Mary arrived for the visit, Elizabeth greeted her, joyfully recognized her for what she was about to become, calling her “**the mother of my Lord,**” and blessed her. Mary responded with this song.

Stanza 1: **My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,⁴⁸ because he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant.**

The Latin translation of these opening words is *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, meaning, “My soul magnifies the Lord.” Consequently this song has come to be known as “The Magnificat.” In this first stanza Mary praises God for what he has done for her, a lady of lowly birth. He has chosen her, despite her humble background, to be his instrument in bringing her and our Savior into the world.

Think about Mary. Here she is. Common name, common person. Probably in her early to mid-teens. Probably not rich by earthly standards. She lived in the small, not very important nor very exciting town of Nazareth which had nothing in and of itself to set it apart from the hundreds of other small villages in the country of Israel. Probably throughout Israel there were thousands of young Jewish women just like her. Yet in his grace and mercy God chose her to not only know Jesus, but to bear him for the world.

There are some wonderful parallels here. Think of Mary and then think of each of us. Are we any less common folk than she was? How many of us are rich or famous? How many of us have royal blood coursing through our veins? How many of us will find our way into history books after our time on earth has been spent? Nevertheless, God has been mindful of our “**humble state**”. We, too, have been chosen by God. We have been chosen to know and believe in Jesus as “**our Savior**” and to bear his image even though we have nothing special to offer God – just like Mary. We could put it this way: It is not who we are that makes us important. It’s whose we are, and we have been chosen by God.

So we come up against the same question Mary did when the glorious news was first announced to her. Why? Why should we be so blessed? Why have we been chosen for the privilege of believing in Jesus as our Savior? Why is it that we know Jesus as Savior while others in this world are spiritually lost? There is no answer except God’s mercy. Amazing grace. And our response can only be the same as Mary’s: Our souls must “**proclaim the greatness of the Lord.**” Because he has looked on us “**with favor**”

Stanza 2: **Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,⁴⁹ because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.**

In this group of verses Mary continues with more thanksgiving and praise. She again is struck with the greatness and mercy that God not only has shown to her personally, but which extends beyond her to every generation before and after her.

Which means she’s talking about us. We are a part of the “**generation to generation**” upon whom God has extended his greatness and mercy. As Mary was struck with the “**great things**” God has done for her, we also must take time to think about all the “**great things**” God has done for us. And now, perhaps

more than any other time of the year, is the time to do this.

As we eagerly wait to celebrate again Jesus' coming at Christmas, have we ever felt overwhelmed by all the extras of Christmas? You know -- The annual list of Christmas grievances! Too much to do. Too many people to please. Too much cleaning. Too many balls to balance in the air. All followed up by the, "I will be happy when the Christmas Season is all done and life goes back to normal" speech. Really! The message from Mary's Song is to focus on the greatness of God and what he has done for us, and not on the self-imposed hassles of fulfilling traditions. And the greatest blessing, of course, is that we know Jesus for who and what he is, a message that God in his grace has passed down to us and our generation.

Stanza 3: **⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.**

In these verses Mary contrasts the blessings of God upon his children with the judgment that falls upon those who do not revere and honor him. "**He filled the hungry with good things**", says Mary. Reminds us how we often eat our way through Christmas. It's no secret that Christmas is often designated as the time after which we're going to get serious about our diet. Lots of good things to get filled up on. Physically.

But Mary is talking spiritual food. What fills us up is Jesus Christ. He alone provides an endless helping of the spiritual food of his saving Gospel that satisfies our souls, things like his unconditional love for us. It is the forgiveness of the sins for us who are by nature damned to hell. It is comfort in time of trouble and confidence in time of uncertainty. It is assurance of never going it alone, and the peace of knowing he's got the whole world – including you and me – in his hands.

Stanza 4: **⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.**

In this final portion Mary expresses joy and gratefulness in God's faithfulness. What he promises he delivers on. And what did he promise? A Savior from sin. Mary rejoiced at the fulfillment which would soon take place, and which she had the privilege of being part of. And we look forward to that promise being fulfilled in our midst once again this Christmas when we gather to sing and hear about baby Jesus, Immanuel, "God with us."

With that our text – and perhaps the world's first Christmas carol – comes to an end. It's a carol of God's love and faithfulness and mercy, promises made and promises kept. It's the basis for every other Christmas hymn written. It's also more than Mary's Song. It's our song as well.

Before we bring our thoughts to a close, there is one final observation to be made regarding our meditation on Mary's Song. And that is the spirit of the one who sang it. This also provides a great lesson for us. May what filled her, fill us. We share the same news she proclaimed. God grant us the ability and insight to share the same spirit of joy. So may the Lord give us a blessed Advent, an Advent Season through which we stayed focused on "the reason for the season," and an Advent Season which will climax for us when we come together with hearts and voices to praise God for his goodness to us in Jesus.