

A Mother's Psalm *Luke 1:39-56*

Mary had a secret. A gleaming archangel visited her in the night. The heavenly messenger told her he came to tell her she would have a baby, a glorious gift from God.

Best of all, the baby was the Messiah: the Anointed One God promised to send to deliver His people. The angel added that the baby would be the Son of God. And so He would. That is why God's own Spirit planted the baby's seed within her womb.

Mary did not have to wonder if it was all true, either. Within a few days, bouts of nausea each morning confirmed she was pregnant.

Mary was still slim. But she knew it would not be long before her stomach would swell. And before that happened, there was one thing she simply had to do before her pregnancy made it impossible.

Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, Verse 39

We cannot help but wonder why Mary scurried off to see Elizabeth. After all, heavy heat waves of summer were already wrinkling the horizon. And the road to Hebron slithered south over a hundred sweltering miles.

That is not all, either. Most roads were little more than donkey trails or footpaths. And there was no such thing as public transportation: no coaches or carts to ride.

So Mary had to walk for almost a week. She plodded through the dust down the road past Perea and across the green waters of the Jordan. Then she passed the tall palms Jericho and climbed up the chalky mountain road through the bleached moonscape of the Judean desert where bandits hid in the shadows of overhanging rocks.

Finally, she topped the Mount of Olives, and Jerusalem was spread out before her. The gold and alabaster of the temple gleamed in the summer sun. But even then Hebron was still a day's journey south.

What was so important that Mary would endure such hardship and go to such great lengths? Why was she so determined to see Elizabeth?

Mary did not travel from Galilee, past Jerusalem into the hill country of Judea out of curiosity. She had no doubts about what the angel had said to her.

She did not have to see for herself that Elizabeth really was pregnant in her old age. No, something much more important stirred Mary's spirit.

The great God of Heaven was wonderfully, marvelously, powerfully at work in Mary. She knew that. And when the angel told her the Lord was also at work in Elizabeth's life, Mary was drawn to be with her.

The desire that made Mary travel so many hot, dusty miles to be with Elizabeth is more than natural. It is both beneficial and blessed. When God is at work in our lives, the very best thing we can do is spend time with other people in whom He is also at work.

It was God's Holy Spirit that fed and fueled Mary's hunger to be with Elizabeth. And He plants the same desire within those who are deeply committed to Him today.

Our Lord knows that those who walk close to Him need intimate fellowship with other people who are also filled with His Spirit. He said it in the Garden of Eden as He watched Adam wander through the green shade all alone.

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone;" Genesis 2:18 (NKJV)

Elizabeth felt just as Mary did. And the jubilation and joy, which filled her when her young relative finally arrived at her home, shows it.

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?" Verses 41-43

Mary was weary from her long, arduous journey. So her joy was not so sparkling and spiced with excitement and exhilaration.

But she was filled with the Holy Spirit, too. And where God's Spirit is, there is always joy.

Praise

Mary expressed her great joy in a psalm of praise. The words bubbled up within her like spring water.

And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Verses 46-47

The small town girl God chose to bear His Son praised the Lord as we should. First and foremost, she praise Him for who He is.

Mary was no different than you and I are. She needed what every human being needs. She needed what we need. A savior!

But we do not need just any savior. We need the one and only Savior. We need the Lord our God

...there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. Isaiah 45:21-22

Knowing the Lord as our own personal Savior unlocks the treasure house of His grace and goodness. But that is not all it does. It also lets us see Him as He really is.

Mary did. That is why Mary's psalm of praise describes God as One who is both powerful and pure.

...the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. Verse 49

What a joy it is to serve a sovereign Savior who is so almighty that absolutely nothing is beyond His ability. When we come to Him burdened down with tears and troubles and trials, we come to a God who can do more than we can even imagine.

That is the splendid promise of Paul's benediction to Christians in the pagan metropolis of Ephesus.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21 (NKJV)

But power alone is never enough. Our God is also pure and holy. He is light without a shred of darkness, life without a shred of death.

So everything our God does in our lives is pure and perfect. And we are to join the multitudes in Heaven in praising Him for His perfection.

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; Revelation 19:1-2

Mary also praised her God because He is both merciful and faithful. He is kind and compassionate to men on every continent, of every culture and every age.

*And His mercy is upon generation after generation after toward those who fear Him.
Verse 50*

Mary was just a young girl. But deep down in the marrow of her bones, she knew what you and I need to learn. We do not need justice from God. As guilty sinners, we need mercy.

Mary's praise was not limited to God's nature, though. She also worshiped the Lord for what He had done for her.

...my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; Verses 47-49

At Hebron, Mary obeyed the command with which David introduced one of his psalms.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, Psalm 103:1-2 (ESV)

David then listed some of those wonderful benefits. He forgives our sins and heals our diseases. He buys us back from the dark despair of Satan's slave market.

Then He fills our lives with love and mercy. And He satisfies our soul with everything that is good.

Surely, we ought to join both David and Mary as they praise and worship the great God of Heaven. After all, the Lord has not only done great things for Mary.

He has also filled our lives with innumerable blessings.

Poverty

It was not as if the new Christians at Corinth did not know the truth about themselves. Still, Paul felt they needed to be reminded who they were and what they were like when Christ first found them.

...consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

God has always focused His grace and goodness upon the foolish and the frail, upon the last and the losers. So it is doubtful that Mary was the best, the brightest, and the most beautiful girl in Nazareth.

Most likely she was the girl who was not there. At the village market or city well, other girls did not seem to notice her. She seemed so insignificant, it was almost as if she was invisible.

No one could see the shining beauty of her heart. No one but God. And He treasured her. So it did not make any difference if other people overlooked her or passed her by.

But God did more than merely observe Mary's purity and sweet sensitivity. He also lifted her up above every woman who ever has or ever will live on earth. Filled with the Spirit, Elizabeth understood that.

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?" Verses 41-43

Mary did not look pregnant. And she had not said a word to anyone. So it was only by the Holy Spirit that Elizabeth knew Mary's secret.

But Elizabeth's excited exclamation was nothing new to Mary. She knew God had conferred upon her an honor which had never been known throughout history and would never again be duplicated.

...my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. Verses 47-48

Mary also knew why God had chosen her. His great delight is to work powerfully in broken hearts and cracked vessels, in the lost and the low, the feeble and the frail.

And Mary was one of those. She was unattractive and unappetizing, neither cunning, quick, nor charismatic.

But that was not really why God chose to exalt her in so wonderful a way. Yes, Mary did come from what she herself described as a "humble state." But much more important than that, she knew it.

She was not ashamed to admit that she was one of the lowly, either. And in the end, those are the people our God uses in powerful ways.

He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. Verses 51-52

Those who are proud of their power or their possessions, their strength or their spirituality are all living in an illusion. None of us are wise; we are all foolish. And none of us are really strong and stable; we are all weak and wayward.

That was the problem that plagued the proud people on the pews at Laodicea. It was not what they knew, but what they did not know that sickened our risen Redeemer.

I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Revelation 3:16-17 (ESV)

It is not the fat who are fed the riches of God's grace and goodness. It is those who are so hungry for the things of God, they cannot stop crying out to Him.

He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. Verse 53

One symptom of serious illness is a loss of appetite. That is also true spiritually. All of us are starving for God's presence in our lives. But some of us are so sick with sin, we have no hunger for the Lord's love.

Mary did not have that problem. She saw herself as she really was: not the first but the last. And that alone made her a candidate for God's rich blessings. Later, her Son would state the principle simply.

...the last shall be first, and the first last. Matthew 20:14

Mary knew she was one of the last. So she was not surprised when God came and lifted her up.

If we would experience the powerful presence of Jesus Christ in our lives, we would do well to take a frank look at ourselves. We would be wise to face our own foolishness and frailty.

After all, they are the ones in whom God pours His power. In fact, they are the only ones.

Promises

When Mary first arrived at Zacharias' home in Hebron, Elizabeth erupted with excitement. Filled with the Holy Spirit, she suddenly understood what no human being could have told her. Mary's child would be the Lord of all creation in human form.

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. Verses 43-44

Elizabeth's baby would be the herald for the coming King; a voice crying out in the wilderness preparing men and women for the Messiah. In the temple, the angel Gabriel also told Zacharias his son would be filled with God's Spirit even when he was inside his mother's body. And so it was.

Although, Jesus was just an embryo deep inside Mary's body, somehow, Elizabeth's baby knew his loving Lord was nearby. And even as an unborn infant, he could not help himself. He leaped with joy.

In that moment, Elizabeth was filled with God's Holy Spirit. And she understood everything. She knew the great blessing God had bestowed upon Mary.

She realized that the same angel who had visited her husband had also visited Mary. She knew what he said to the girl, too. And she knew how Mary had responded.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord. Verse 45

It seems startlingly simple. Mary believed what that angel told her. She realized that Gabriel was merely a messenger, and the message was from God Himself.

So she simply believed it. Later, she spoke of the same thing in her psalm of praise.

He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever. Verses 54-55

God's power always flows from His Word. That is what happened with Abraham. The Lord spoke to him and offered the old man some very personal promises. And Abraham believed God.

But both Mary and Abraham took their faith a step farther than mere intellectual understanding and acceptance. They dared not only to believe God's promises were true; they believed those promises would be fulfilled in their very own lives.

That is the kind of faith God looks for. He not only wants us to believe His promises are true. He would also have us step out in faith, trusting that He will actually do as He has promised.

Our faith must be very specific and personal. We must believe our Lord will fulfill His promises in our own lives.

That was Mary's faith. Like Abraham, she believed her Mighty God was powerful enough to perform what He promised.

...he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Romans 4:20-21

Mary never doubted that God would do precisely as He promised. She believed God's Word, implicitly, unquestioningly, and unceasingly.

And that is just what we must do if we are to experience the power of the living God in our lives.

We must simply believe God's Word.

