

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Mary's Praise**

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55

Code: 42-14

Well, it is with great joy and anticipation that we return to our study of Luke's gospel. Luke, known as the beloved physician who wrote one of the four gospels, one of the four histories of the life and work of Jesus Christ. We have come to love this book and we're only in the first chapter and so much is yet ahead of us of the richness of this Holy Spirit inspired testimony.

In order to fix in our minds the passage before us, I want to just give you a little bit of brief background from Luke chapter 1. Luke's story of Jesus begins with a couple, an old couple in their 60's, or 70's, or 80's. Barren, never able to have children, their names - Zacharias and Elizabeth. Zacharias happened to be a priest. They lived out in the hill country of Judea, perhaps in the vicinity of Jerusalem in the southern part of the land of Israel. And several weeks a year it was his responsibility to leave his local ministry as a priest and go to the temple and serve in the temple. Each of the priests did that at certain times during the year. And on this occasion while he was there the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Nobody had seen an angel in over 450 years. God hadn't spoken at all in over 400 years. There hadn't been any miracles in over 400 years, and perhaps it had been 500 years since there were miracles, plural. So life was pretty common and pretty routine. There was no intervention by God for centuries until this moment.

The angel Gabriel coming out of the presence of God comes to Zacharias while he's serving his duties as a priest in the temple. And he announces to Zacharias that he and his wife are going to have a child, and that child is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah, the greatest prophet up until that time who ever lived, John the Baptist.

And, of course, following the forerunner, John the Baptist of the Messiah, would be the Messiah. So this was an incredible and important news as the plan of redemption had now reached its crescendo. And God was moving into history to bring the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior, the Lamb who would bear the sins of the world.

So the story in the first part of Luke chapter 1 is a story of the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and Elizabeth. And that story sort of comes to its end, Elizabeth is pregnant. God gave Zacharias and Elizabeth together the ability to produce a son and that son is now in her womb and she is six months pregnant when that part of the story closes.

And then comes the story starting in verse 26 of a young girl. This time not an older lady, this time a young girl, Not a married lady but a virgin probably a 13-year-old girl by the name of Mary. And the same angel Gabriel comes to her, this time in the north in Galilee about 75 or 80 miles away from where Elizabeth and Zacharias lived. And God sent this angel with another birth announcement, this time the virgin will conceive without a man and God Himself will create in her womb a child who will be the Son of the Most High, He will be the One given the throne of His father David. He will have a kingdom over the house of Jacob and a kingdom that has no end. He will be, in a word, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of God.

And so, you have these two incredible conception miracles. One in the case of Elizabeth and one in the case of Mary. Last time we saw how the two women met. Mary, having heard from Gabriel and realizing that she is going to be the mother of the Son of God, realizing that God is going to perform in her a conception miracle is told by the angel about Elizabeth. She otherwise would not have known. She is told about Elizabeth who is now pregnant six months even in her old age, well in to her 60's, 70's, maybe even 80's. And Mary then hastens, as we learned last time in verse 39, to go to the hill country to meet Elizabeth.

We saw some things about that that are absolutely critical. Who would understand a 13-year-old girl saying she was pregnant by God? Who would buy that? Well there was only one person who would really understand because she had just received the conception miracle from God. Who would believe that a 13-year-old girl had been visited by Gabriel? Well there was one person who would believe it, that's Elizabeth because she had been visited by Gabriel as well. Who would believe a young girl who said she's the mother of the Messiah? I'll tell you who, an older lady who had just been told she was the mother of the forerunner of Messiah. And if the forerunner was conceived, the Messiah couldn't be far behind.

It was very important then that Mary see Elizabeth. And the reason that they were to meet was for confirmation of this incredible message. Last time we saw that meeting take place and Mary received personal confirmation. The angel had come to her and she believed it, but surely in the midst of her faith were some lingering doubts and questions and how was this going to happen and how could it take place? And the miracle was more than she could comprehend. And what was all involved in this. We can only imagine the swirling emotions that churned in the mind of Mary. The angel told her she would have a son in her womb that would be created there by God. That son would be the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world, God in human flesh. On the one hand, she would be thinking about the privilege because certainly there had been many Jewish mothers who had wished to be the mother of Messiah. She knew her honor was singular, her honor was unique.

On the other hand, she was only 13, she was betrothed to a young man named Joseph. All of a sudden she would now be in the position of being unwed and pregnant which could be not only embarrassing but life threatening. Deuteronomy 22 called for execution in such conditions and the

society of her time called for a divorce in that condition. Joseph would know it wasn't his child. Would there be disgrace? Would she be an outcast? Would she be stoned? Would she be divorced? How could she get people to believe this? All of these thoughts swirling around in her mind, even though she believed there would be all these thoughts.

In spite of the fears, in spite of the questions, she willingly submitted to God's plan. In verse 38 she said to the angel Gabriel, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word." That shows her faith. She submits completely. Some women would have boasted. Some women would have rebelled. But Mary's response was right. She modestly, quietly embraced God's will for her and left the concerns with God. And then she went immediately, verse 39 says, to visit Elizabeth and there she received confirmation.

I told you she received a three-fold confirmation. First of all, personal confirmation when she saw the birth miracle, or the conception miracle that had occurred in Elizabeth because she could see that Elizabeth was six months pregnant. There was personal confirmation that conception miracles did happen and that God was doing that and Elizabeth was personal proof of that.

And then there was physical confirmation that came when the babe in the womb of Elizabeth, John the Baptist, leaped for joy when he heard the message about Messiah's conception. God literally using the physical animation of that fetus to confirm that in fact that this was a true word from God.

Then there was prophetic confirmation. Personal confirmation came from Elizabeth. The physical confirmation came from the unborn John the Baptist. The prophetic confirmation came from God Himself who filled Elizabeth with His Holy Spirit and she spoke the Word of God as we remember in verses 42 to 45.

All of that just removed any final small trace of doubt from Mary's mind, all of that erased any lingering fears or questions. This was the final confirmation that what the angel had told her was in fact the truth and that she was carrying in her womb the beginnings of the life of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. All her doubts then having been erased, all her questions to some degree having been answered, her faith having been settled rock solid, she then in verse 46 bursts out in praise...praise pours out of her mouth.

This is what she says, "And Mary said, "My soul exalts the Lord and 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 and holy is His name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm. He has scattered those who were proud and the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has exalted those who are humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty handed. He has given help to Israel, His

servant, in remembrance of His mercy as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever."

That is called Mary's Magnificat from the Latin word that translates the word "exalts" in verse 46. We'll just call it Mary's praise.

Mary is a model believer. She heard a word from the Lord. She believed it. She submitted to it. And she praised God for it. Mary is a model believer who hears the Word of God, believes it with her whole heart, acts upon it no matter what the consequence might be, leaving her concerns with God and bursts forth in praise.

The praise of Mary, frankly, is a classic example of pure worship. There may not be a better one in the New Testament. In fact, this is often called the Hymn of the Incarnation. It is a hymn of praise to God who is incarnate in Christ...and in Mary's case in her very womb.

Now just some thoughts in general about what I just read, this praise of Mary. It is filled with echoes of Scripture, filled with Scripture. And it reveals that Mary, this young teen-aged girl had her heart and mind literally saturated with the Old Testament Word of God. The psalm contains repeated echoes of Hannah's prayers, you remember, from 1 Samuel 1 and 2. Hannah was the one who had prayed to God for a child and God also worked wondrously in her life to provide her with a child named Samuel. The psalm that Mary pours out here contains numerous references to the law, to the Psalms and to the writings of the prophets. It indicates that this young teen-aged girl knew her Old Testament. It's a great testimony to her own life and her devotion. It's a great testimony to her parents and how she had been raised to love the Word of God and to know it very well. And it's not as if before offering this praise she has to go and find a concordance so she can bring together the assorted verses. They just flow from within her.

For example, she starts out in verse 46 by saying, "My soul doeth magnify the Lord," which is an echo of Psalm 34:2, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." In verse 47 she says, "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," which echoes Isaiah 45:21, "There is no God else beside Me, a just God and a Savior." And in verse 48 she says, "He has regarded the lowest state of His handmaid," which echoes 1 Samuel 1:11, "If Thou wilt indeed look on the infliction of Thine handmaid and remember me and not forget Thy handmaid," the words of Hannah. It also is reminiscent of Psalm 136:23, "Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever." Again in verse 48 she says, "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," which echoes the words of Leah in Genesis 30 verse 13, "Happy am I for the daughters will call me blessed." In verse 49 she says, "He that is mighty has done to me great things," which echoes Psalm 126:3, "The Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad." And then in verse 49 she says, "Holy is His name," directly quoting Psalm 111:9, "Holy and reverend is His name." And so it goes that she is very well versed in the Old Testament as she unfolds her familiarity with Scripture and applies it to her own situation.

She also understands the history of Israel. She understands how God has exercised His mighty arm in verse 51 and how in the past He has scattered the proud. He has brought down rulers. He exalts the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, sent the rich empty handed. She understands how through the history of Israel God has helped Israel, verse 54, and done so in remembrance of His mercy promised, in verse 55, by the Abrahamic covenant. She is not just familiar with Scripture, she knows covenant theology. She understands the theology of the Abrahamic covenant. She understands that it was an eternal pledge made to Abraham by which generations would be blessed. She is knowledgeable of Scripture and she is familiar with theology. She had read, she had heard, she had memorized, she had meditated on the sacred Scripture and when her heart burst out in praise it wasn't trivial and it wasn't sort of self-invented. Scripture just poured out of her mouth. It was the language of Scripture showing her alacrity, her facility and her familiarity with the text. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, as Matthew 12:34 and when she spoke it reflected that her heart was filled with God's Word.

Mary, this young teen-aged girl knew the God of Scripture, the God of Israel in a deeply personal way. She knew His Word. She understood it. She had studied it. She had laid hold of its promises and its covenants. And those promises filled her thoughts and filled her heart. And when she says in verse 48, "All generations will call me blessed," she is speaking of herself as the recipient, not the dispenser of blessing. She doesn't say all generations will look to me to bless them. They'll consider me blessed because of what I received. She is never the dispenser of blessing. She's never the dispenser of divine grace. It is the Lord to whom her soul magnifies in verse 46. It is God my Savior whom her spirit exalts in verse 47. She sings of the great things that God has done, verse 49, for me. Great things God has done on her behalf. She rejoices in the great mercy God has shown her.

And, you see, none of this supports the foolish notion that Mary herself ought to be an object of adoration. Mary does not identify herself as being the object of adoration, but rather she adores God. Tragically, ironic it is that somebody would make her the object of adoration, make her the object of praise. On one occasion a woman in a crowd tried to do that, recorded in Luke 11. In the middle of a crowd a woman cried out to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which you nursed." And that was true. She was blessed but Jesus' response immediately was not to elevate Mary. His response in Luke 11:27 and 28 was this, "Yes, yea rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." The path of blessing is the path of obedience to the Word of God. That was true for Mary, that's true for anybody and everybody.

Now this is the key to understanding Mary's praise. It is an expression of great faith. It is an expression of her love for God, her worship of God, her understanding of Scripture, the promises of God, the pledges of God. A young woman in incredible circumstances with immense challenges and difficulties who was nevertheless pouring out worship to the God she knew and the God she believed.

What you get from this in all the legacy that Mary leaves us is an example of what a model believer is like. As I've said before, she doesn't hear your prayers, she doesn't answer prayer. She's not a co-redemptrix. All those things that have been said about Mary misrepresent her completely. She would be appalled if she knew that people worshiped her. She is a model of the true worshiper who worships the only one worthy to be worshiped. She is not the worshiped, she is the worshiper.

I want to show you three things that we learn about worship from Mary. Number one is the attitude of worship. Mary is a perfect illustration of the attitude of worship. And I'm going to give you four sub-points to this that unfold at least to me the attitude of worship.

Number one, worship is internal...worship is internal. You will notice in verse 46 that Mary said, "My soul exalts the Lord." In verse 47, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Down deeper than her mouth, down deeper than her lips was her soul and her spirit. Those terms really are interchangeable in the Scripture, they have to do with the inner person. She summons up, she uses them both though to sort of emphasize how whole this is in her inner person. Her whole inner being, mind, emotion, will, she sums it all up, all of her mental faculties, all of her emotional feelings, all of those elements of her being on the inside are called together like the instruments in a great orchestra that come together in a crescendo of praise...everything deep inside of her. Worship begins with an attitude. It is the inner heart of adoring praise that is the essence of real worship. External worship, shallow superficial observance is intolerable to God. Isaiah 29:13 says, "This people draw near Me with their mouth and with their lips they do honor Me, but every move of their heart far from Me." That is a dishonor to God. Jesus said God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. It has to rise from deep inside.

The true worshiper is the one whose heart is devoted to adoring God with total sincerity, the one who deep down has profound gratitude to God. And that's where it has to come from, not on the surface. It cannot be shallow. It cannot be in any sense superficial. That is frankly intolerable to God. It has to come from deep inside the soul and spirit. As it were, untouched by circumstances, it rises because of what we know to be true about our God and His great work. It is internal. Let's build on that a little bit.

Secondly, it's intense...it's intense. In verse 46 she says, "My soul exalts the Lord," and some translations would say, "Makes great," some would say, "Magnifies." The word is *megalunae*(?), mega...in other words, it means to enlarge, to magnify, to cause something to swell, or to cause something to grow, to extend something. It's...mega is used with being loud, it's used for the word "great" or "large" and it also implies the intensity here.

Mary is not just from deep within praising God in some minimal fashion, but with a swelling, magnifying, enlarging attitude from the heart. And then the word "rejoices" in verse 47, "My spirit has

rejoiced, or rejoices," agalliao, it means to be overjoyed. It's another...it's a word of hyperbole again, it's another word that means to have an exceeding joy, or as it's translated in one case "unspeakable joy," loud joy, grandiose joy. So you can see the intensity here. This is...this is an overwhelming kind of thing rising from within this young girl.

Mary is not only internal in her worship, she's intense. You see, with Mary you don't have to induce worship, and true worship with us is the same thing. It's not something you have to induce on the surface. I don't know about you but I don't have to hear schmaltzy music to sort of emotionally and psychologically mellow me out to worship God. It's got to be something deeper than that. It can't be induced by certain kinds of music, strains of the organ and stained glass windows, etc. It's one of the reasons, to be honest with you, that I have something of a sort of a distaste for some of that. And if you look around you see there's no holy hardware hanging in here. It's just a pretty plain place, it's not that that in itself is wrong, it's just that worship is not necessarily associated or attached to that. In fact, I would probably find little disagreement if I said to you that the places in the world that have done the most to try to put worship-inducing architecture have the least real worship going on. Worship is something that comes out of the heart, it's not something you induce.

And you will notice that the music that we present here is not music that's intended to do something to your emotions, it's music that's intended to do something to your mind. It's music to make you think, not make you feel. We want you to think about the great truths so that you can worship God on the basis of the things that are true about Him, that's worshipping in truth as well as spirit.

And so, the worship that Mary offered was not something that took some kind of external inducement to generate. It was something that came from the heart on a contemplation of what God was doing in her life, and we'll see more about that in a moment. She worshiped then internally and she worshiped with intensity. She couldn't resist the magnification of the Lord and this overjoyed attitude.

You know, you can travel all over the world and you'll see idols and shrines to Mary everywhere. I mean, I've seen them in churches, cathedrals, in houses and I've seen them in hotel lobbies, I've seen them in hotel rooms. I've seen them in restaurants. I've seen them along the highways and byways and paths up in the mountains in the most remote places. This is a result of the Roman Catholic Church exalting Mary saying that she was immaculately conceived, that she was leading a sinless life, that she was a perpetual virgin, that therefore because of her sinlessness she didn't die but was ascended into heaven called the assumption of Mary. They teach now that she is the Queen of Heaven and that she is the co-redemptrix with Christ. All of this is foreign to Scripture, none of this is in the Bible at all and it all convolutes the true understanding of Mary. Mary is not one to be worshiped, Mary is one who was the true and pure worshiper of God. Here she is intensely magnifying God, nothing superficial about it. There's nothing induced about it. It is all spontaneous. It is not generated by the outside circumstances which were foreboding for her in some ways, it is generated by the inside attitude, rises up from inside with great intensity.

You know, the history of Israel can furnish you with a contrast of that. All you have to do is go back and read Malachi. Read the first chapter of Malachi about verse 7 to verse 14, and God indicts the Jewish community, the Jewish people because they were bringing him polluted sacrifices. Instead of bringing the spotless lamb, they were bringing the lame ones. They were offering God the worst of their flock. Their whole worship, all their sacrifices was a travesty of superficiality and God in Malachi 1 says, "You don't think that pleases Me, do you? You don't think I'm accepting that, do you? Try offering that to your governor when it's time to pay your taxes and see how he likes it. If he wouldn't accept it, do you think I'm going to accept it?"

The prophet Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, sent by God to expose and denounce the apostasy and hypocrisy of Israel said essentially the same thing in Amos 5. Speaking for God he says, "I hate your feasts, I despise your festivals and your ceremonies. I don't want your burnt offerings, your meat offerings. I don't want your songs, stop singing your songs, stop playing your harps, it's making Me sick. It's all so superficial and so shallow."

And then there was the prophet Isaiah in chapter 1 who does the same thing. He says, you know, he says, for God, "To what purpose is all of this stuff you're doing? I'm full of your burnt offerings and rams and fat of said beasts and I don't delight in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or goats. Don't bring anymore oblations to Me. Your incense is an abomination. The Sabbaths and new moons, the calling of assemblies, I can't tolerate them. It's all iniquity, even your solemn meetings. My soul hates your new moons, your feast days, you are a trouble to Me...they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of it all." And He goes on indicting them for their superficiality.

In contrast to all that kind of stuff was Mary who loved God down deep in her heart and who knew the truth about God and who knew her God well. And who in response to this great mercy of God, this great blessing of God to make her the mother of Messiah and to bring into the world the Savior of the world, the Lamb of God, the great, glorious promised King, just bursts out in praise and it isn't just that she's thankful for what God is doing for her, but what's going to happen in the whole history of redemption through the Messiah's arrival. She's filled with joy and her praise is internal and intense.

There's a third thing about true worship. It is also habitual. It is also habitual. I'm just going to borrow this from verse 46 where you have a present tense verb "magnifies" or "exalts" and just stretching that a little bit, that's a present tense verb meaning continuous action. Here is someone who is in the flow of life praising God in an unbroken fashion. It flows on uninterrupted. Fluctuating circumstances do not impact true worship because no matter what happens circumstantially that doesn't change God, right? That doesn't change God, it doesn't change His Word, it doesn't change His purpose. It doesn't change His promises. It doesn't change our responsibility. That's why the Apostle Paul said, "In everything give thanks." You know, the circumstances of life may be going like this...but your attitude ought to be going like this...because nothing that is eternal changes. It flows on uninterrupted.



Paul said he had learned whatever state he was in to be content. He learned in every situation to be thankful. His whole life was a magnification of the Lord. If I live, I live for the Lord. If I die, I die unto the Lord. Whether I live or die, I'm the Lord's. Nothing ever changed that, it was unwavering.

I mean, that's the way life should be. It's just that it's a ceaseless, habitual expression of praise. I'll say a little bit more about it tonight but I spent a few days in the early part of the week trekking through the Senoran Desert over in Arizona with some naturalists. And I don't know what they were thinking about but I know what I was thinking about, I was thinking about God. All the way along(??)...every time they'd pick up a rock and explain to me the whole eco system of a scorpion, all I could think about was the intelligence of God.

And they would tell me all about these mountains and mesas and all this other stuff, all I could think about was God. I was just in wonder. I just kept saying to myself, "This is unbelievable, the mind of God...is there no end to this?" This is...all of this is seen in the perspective of God. And they were telling us about a whole civilization of people that were there, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, who disappeared and speaking about the things they did religiously. It was little wonder to me that they disappeared, probably in the plan of God and the judgment of God that fell upon them. I could just see God in everything and it was just an opportunity to praise God, and to see God manifest. That's how...that's...I mean, that's how life should be for us, that's the perspective of habitual praise. If worship for you happens on Sunday morning only, it doesn't happen. If we have to sort of, you know, induce you into it, who are you kidding? It should be a way of life in which you view everything. Like David said, "I have set the Lord always before me."

So, worship...and you see it here in Mary...worship is internal, it's intense and it's habitual. And one fourth thing, it's humble. And I'll say this without fear of contradiction. Only humble people worship.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, you see, proud people can't worship God, they're too busy worshipping themselves. And I mean, right at the beginning of the Ten Commandments God said, "You shall have no other gods." And the dominant god, competing for the throne of divine rule, is you. True worship can only come from a humble heart...that's right...only from a humble heart. That's why James 4:6 says, "God resists the proud, God gives grace to the humble." Pride stands in the way of true worship. Only two things hinder true worship: one is ignorance, two is pride.

Your worship can be hindered if you don't know the God you're worshiping. And that's a sad thing. You know, there are so many people who would say they're Christians and perhaps many of them are, and they're sitting in church where they're taught very little, they know very little about God. Their knowledge of the Bible is very shallow, very limited, very superficial, almost infantile. They're spiritual babes. And they're cheated out of worshiping God in the greatest sense because they just don't know enough about God to be literally exhilarated by that reality.

And the other thing that stands in the way, once you cross the barrier of ignorance and you know God and you understand the Word of God, the other thing that interrupts worship, and severely interrupts it to the point where all of a sudden grinds it to a halt is pride. Pride is the worship of self, in a word. You want a definition of pride, here it is, worship of self. That's pride...worship of self. And worship of self competes with worship of God. You know, proud people can't be thankful because they never get what they think they deserve...no matter what they get. Proud people can't be thankful because they constantly remember all the wrongs done to them. Proud people can't be true worshipers of God because they want to strike back at everybody who offends them, so they've got a bitter edge. Proud people find it very difficult to be filled with praise because they constantly reflect on how they've been mistreated, even by God.

So anybody who is a true worshiper is a person who is selfless. The more selfless you are, the more likely you are to worship God. If we can just cross the barrier of your ignorance and teach you who God is, and you can deal with the sin of pride, then you can really worship in spirit and in truth. In fact, the Bible says God hates the proud. And when you come to Jesus, according to the Beatitudes, He says, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit," that means to realize they're bankrupt, they're nothing. "Blessed are those who mourn," weeping over their nothingness. "Blessed are those who are meek, or humble." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness," they know they have nothing to offer. It's the meek and the humble who worship.

And that's Mary...that's Mary. Look at verse 48, "He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant." And isn't it amazing, "Behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed." Boy, can you believe that? Isn't that amazing? God...God has looked at me and I'm a nobody, is what she's saying. And it's unbelievable to think of it, but by His mercy, me, an absolute nobody, a humble nobody bondservant, and generations upon generations after this are going to make note of how God blessed this nobody. That's what she's saying.

As I said at the beginning, you know, some...some women who would...if God had chosen to tell them they would be the mother of Messiah...would have been proud about that. You never see that with Mary. She was just constantly overwhelmed that God would have even used her for this. She knew she was a sinner. She knew she was nothing. She knew it was mercy. Look at verse 49, what staggered Mary was the Mighty One had done great things for me. In other words, the power of God had moved into my life to produce this child. And here's the remarkable part, "And holy is His name." That's the shock. Can you get this, she says? I'm a nobody, I'm a nothing and yet in the future all generations are going to count me as having been blessed by God because of the mighty One coming into my life and giving me this child, and the amazing thing is He is holy and He has still condescended to work in my life.

You see, it was God's holiness against her sinfulness that blew her mind. That was the issue. It just staggered her. First of all, socially she was nothing. She says He's regarded the lowest state. Lowest state is simply humiliation as a state of being. She was nobody. She was a simple village girl in a no place town called Nazareth. She was nobody. She wasn't important in society, she wasn't important at all. And you know what? Even after this happened she never became important after this. She was never lifted up to any throne. The church never put her on a pedestal or a throne. She was never accorded any particular honors. You don't see that anywhere happening in the book of Acts. She just blended right in to the church with everybody else. She was a very simple girl.

Yes, she was of the royal line of David. That's true. But there were a lot of folks in the royal line of David who were just kind of hidden. Their little secret was that they were in the line of David, but it was a secret to everybody else and they were largely among the poor. She was a common woman. She was engaged to a very common young guy. He was an apprentice carpenter. What did a carpenter do? Well, you know what he did, he made yokes to put on beasts of burden. He made plows. He made staves, sticks. Made tables and chairs, maybe even did some masonry work. Just a common laborer.

But it wasn't just the social status that describes her. Although she does say she was a woman of low estate, and that does refer to her sort of humiliation as a state of being, it isn't limited to her social status, it has more to do with her spiritual character. She recognizes she is a sinner. She recognizes she is a sinner. She's unworthy. How can God, the Mighty One, who is perfectly holy link up with this woman? It's just...it's more than she can comprehend. She doesn't have an exalted view of herself, she has an exalted view of the Lord in a humble view of herself. It just staggers her that God would come to her, this humble nobody, this bondsman. It staggers her that all generations in the future are going to look back at her and note the unique and singular blessing that God bestowed upon her when the Mighty One did His great thing of planting the Messiah in her womb. And staggering thought of all thoughts, He's holy and He still is interacting with a sinner. Just beyond comprehension.

That's the stuff...that's the kind of humility that makes for true worship. When you're overwhelmed with your sinfulness and you're knowledgeable about God's holiness, and you're blessed to know that a holy God would work in your life. That's humility. If Mary was to be exalted, if she was to be blessed, as verse 42 says, it was because God saw her unworthiness, her sinfulness, her lowliness and gave her singular mercy.

In Isaiah 57:15, "Thus says the high and lofty One," this is God speaking, the One who inhabits eternity whose name is holy, "I dwell in the high and holy place with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." God says I'm up in heaven, and guess who I'm with? I'm with the humble...I'm with the humble.

What then is the attitude of worship? It is internal, it is intense, it is habitual, it is humble. The right attitude for worship is a deep heartfelt inner spring of intense attitude and joy over the mercy of God that bursts forth habitually from a humble soul who is overwhelmed by his or her own sense of unworthiness. That's the attitude of worship.

Secondly, let's look at the object of worship. And Mary teaches us this as well by her example. The object of worship, very, very clear, verse 46, "My soul exalts the Lord." Notice how she defines the Lord in verse 47. "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She could have said a lot of things...God, my helper, God my strength, God my wisdom. She could have said a lot of things about God but all worship really focuses on God as Savior. Let me tell you, if I believed that God was creator, and I do, of course, but if it was limited to that, if I believed and my belief in God was limited to creator, I'd have a hard time worshiping Him. I could say, "Well, you know, it's...you know, You're an amazing mind, You're an amazing God because You made all this," but I'd have a hard time worshiping Him if He had never done anything to deliver me from my sins and eternal judgment, right? What would be the point? I would always be saying...Well, it's nice that You made all of this, is there anything You can do about my sin? Like the nations of the world who have their deities, I could fear a God and try to pacify Him or appease Him. Or like the prophets of Baal, I could try to wake him up from a sleep to come to my aid occasionally.

But if God didn't offer me salvation from my sin and deliverance from eternal hell, I would be hard pressed to worship Him. Frankly, I would be too disappointed. And that's why in the end, we worship God not because He's the creator, not because He's the sustainer of life, not because He has brought into the world so many things that make us rich, we worship God because in the end He saves us from sin and hell, right? And that's where Mary was. "My soul exalts the Lord and my spirit is rejoiced in God my Savior." She knew in the coming of Messiah was the reality of salvation coming to its fruition. She knew that was going to happen was the Messiah would be born, the Lamb of God, the One who would bear sins. God was going to redeem through this child, this child's name would be Jesus, He would save His people from their sins, as Matthew 1 said. And so she knew what was happening. Salvation was happening. And so she's worshiping God as the saving God whose salvation is now coming into history through her child.

And frankly, as I said, there wouldn't be any...there wouldn't be any point in worshiping God if we were all going to die and go to hell. We would...we would hate Him...we would despise Him...we would feel cheated by Him. Worship is then primarily, substantially, foundationally because we acknowledge God as our Savior from sin. God is a Savior, we've said that many times. God is a Savior by nature. He's even a Savior temporally. Sinners don't die the minute they sin. Sinners smell the grass and the flowers and see the blue sky and eat a good meal and sit in a comfortable chair and love their wives and have blessed children and kiss a baby and take a vacation. And...I mean, they live and that's because God by nature is a Savior. First Timothy 4:10, "He's the Savior of all men," temporally and physically, He gives them a saving...a saving grace.

We say...What do you mean by that? Well the moment you sin you should die...the wages of sin is death, the soul that sins it shall die. But you don't because God is a saving God and by nature He demonstrates that in a physical level. Sadly there are people who accept the fact that they live and they go on with life and they enjoy His common grace and they don't ever see Him as the Savior of their eternal souls. But He puts His saving nature on display by saving sinners temporally and physically in order to lead them to repentance, Romans 2 says, so He can save them spiritually and eternally.

Mary is saying "God is my Savior," not just from illness and sickness and trouble in life. God is my Savior from sin, is what she is saying. God is my Savior from sin. This child will be named Jesus, Matthew 1:21, because He would save His people from their sin. Mary is worshiping God as a sinner because she is so thrilled that God will save her from her sin. She knew that depended on grace.

So, the attitude of worship, we've seen, and the object of worship, we've seen. The object of worship is the God who is our Savior. No matter what else may come and go in life, no matter what troubles you have, in the light of the end, what's there to be worried about, right? Your salvation is eternal and secure.

The third element of worship that Mary illustrates is the reason or the motive for worship. She worships from the heart with intensity, habitually, humbly. She worships the God who is Savior. She worships Him for three reasons. Reason number one, what God is doing for her...what God is doing for her. Great illustration here.

Look at verse 48, "He has 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 and holy is His name." Worship starts right there, folks, it really does. It starts with what God is doing in your life. And that's where she starts her worship. It's what God is doing in my life that causes me to worship. The only person who truly worships is the one who has experienced the saving power of God, the mercy of God. She's a believer. This is a true believer here. Sure she was before the birth of Christ and before the cross, but she was a true believer. She had been saved from her sins by faith in the true God. She was a genuine penitent, even at a young age she had come to the knowledge of the law of God. She knew she didn't measure up to that law. She had gone to God with a penitent heart and asked for mercy and received it. God had saved her. She says, "God, my Savior." And now that great saving work would be finally accomplished when God who had saved her from her sins would put her sins on Messiah who would die in her place. She knew she was a sinner. She saw her need. She knew God was her Savior and she worships God in that knowledge.

That's where worship starts, it starts personally. Like all of us who are saved from our sins, we start praising God for what He's done for us. Certainly the blood of David flowed in her veins, but for many

generations that royal race had lived in seclusion among the poor, cherishing the secret of its high descent but living in social status. And she saw not so much the low social status as her low spiritual state. She was astonished, this little phrase, verse 48, "He has had regard for the humble state of His bondsman." He literally has looked on me. God looked down on me, unworthy, a nobody with no rights and only sin and saved me. Her praise then starts very personally because of what God has done for her. This is what overwhelms her.

Verse 49, "All generations in the future are going to count me blessed because the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is His name." Some translations say "the Mighty One has done great things to me," namely it saved her and called her to this high calling. You know, beloved, real worship starts with what God has done in your life. And if you're not worshiping God, maybe you need to go back and be thankful again for what God has done. You need to rehearse again the greatness of His salvation. Have you forgotten how gracious God is? How great His work in your life is? Have you forgotten that the Mighty One has done great things for you and holy is His name? Have you forgotten that a holy God has stooped down to save a wretched sinner like we are? If you can't be thankful about that, maybe you don't understand that or you are indeed self-centered. The joyous, deep-down soul felt praise and adoration that literally overwhelms the heart and pours out in praise to God rises when you remember your great salvation.

So, first of all, the reason for her worship was what God was doing for her. Secondly, the reason for her worship extended to what God would do for others...to what God would do for others. She is not only thrilled about His work in her life, but look at verse 50, "And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him." There she quotes Psalm 103 and verse 17. And she's again showing her familiarity with the Old Testament. And she says and it's not just me, but this mercy of God, this salvation of God is going to come to generation after generation after generation to people who fear, or reverence God. Wherever there are sincere worshipers, wherever there are those who truly love God, who truly come to God for mercy and grace...there is going to be that same salvation. This praise starts with her, as it always does, and then it goes beyond her and she's praising God for what He's going to do in the future to bring the same salvation to all who fear Him. Just another way to say all the saved, all who believe, all whose hearts are filled with deep and reverent regard for the person and will of God and commitment to His glory. She's worshiping God not only because of her own personal experience of salvation, but that which will come in the future.

Thirdly, and this, I think, is so beautiful. She worships God because of what He's done for others in the past. Starting with herself, moves forward and then goes backward. Verse 51, "He has done mighty deeds." There are seven aorist tenses. He has...twice in verse 51...He has, verse 52...and has, verse 53...he has, verse 54...he has...and so it goes. And she's looking back to the past and she's worshiping God for what He is doing in her life, what He will do in the lives of generations to come of people who fear Him, and she worships God for what is already history. She looks back in redemptive history.

Now this is a typical Jewish approach to worship. You find this all through the Psalms. Very typical...they worship God basically for two categories. They worship God because of who He was, reciting His attributes, and what He had done, reciting His deeds. She went back over history. Believe me, if we had time we'd go through and show illustrations in the Old Testament of these things. But she says...I can go back and I can see times when He's done mighty deeds with His arm. The history of Israel evidences that. He has scattered those who were proud and the thoughts of their heart. How many go back to Egypt and see what He did to Pharaoh, for example. How many would go back to the book of Daniel and see what He did to Nebuchadnezzar who was so proud and lifted up in his heart. God had to turn him into like a wild beast. God has done that in behalf of His people. Verse 52, "He has brought down rulers from their thrones." We could go back to the study of the taking of the land of Canaan and how God used the children of Israel to go in and how they took over that land and it became the possession of God. There were many leaders and rulers who were dethroned. And in their place, verse 52, "He exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty handed." How many times the hand of divine judgment came down on the wealthy and the prosperous and the self-fulfilled. How many times, verse 54, He has given help to Israel, His servant. All through history.

And so, she's going back...she may have had some specific occasions in mind. She may have just been doing somewhat of a general sweep over the history of Israel. She said in the history of Israel in God's redemptive history, He overturned the normal social order. The proud with all their thoughts, the imaginations of their hearts, the mighty with their great positions of power and thrones, the rich with all their possessions, they've all be overturned and overthrown. God has exercised His mighty arm in overthrowing the proud and the mighty and the rich. And on the other hand, He has filled the hungry with food, with good things and that's taken, as you know, out of Psalm 107. And He has exalted those who are humble, back in verse 52, and He's given help to Israel His servant, verse 54.

God overturns the natural order. You see, all the most powerful, all the wealthiest, all the proudest intellectuals cannot withstand the purposes of God. God has torn them all down and given mercy to the humble, the lowly, the hungry, the outcasts, a wandering slave people called Israel. And all of this, this is so good, verse 54, "He does in remembrance of His...what's the word?...mercy...mercy." He does it in remembrance of His mercy. He is merciful to sinners. And as long as you're going to be proud, self-sufficient, and you're going to trust in your riches, and in your throne, your achievement, your exaltation, God is going to tear you down. But where your heart is hungry and you recognize your low estate and your servile circumstances, God will lift you up.

Mary saw a history of mercy in the past. She was experiencing mercy in the present. And she saw mercy for generations to come. She's looking at redemptive history. She is worshiping the God who is a Savior, who is saving her, will save generations and has saved generations in the past. This is quite an incredible hymn that Mary presents. She sees all of redemptive history, in verse 55, as a fulfillment

of the Abrahamic covenant. She was a theologian. "It's all because of what He said to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever."

You go back to Genesis 12, and that section that follows in the book of Genesis and you will read that God promised to Abraham that He would bless through Abraham's seed the world. He was promising salvation in that great covenant. And Mary is saying...God who promised way back in Genesis 12 salvation to and through Abraham is bringing that salvation to pass by His mercy in my life, He'll do it in generations to come, He has done it in generations past. God is a saving God and that great saving purpose of God will reach its culmination when Jesus goes to the cross to die and bear the sins of all the people in all three categories...present, future and past. So this hymn of praise is a sweeping example of how it is that we should praise God. We see the attitude, we see the object and we see the reasons for her praise. This incarnation, this child is God showing mercy to me, to generations yet ahead, and generations in the past, for Jesus was the Savior of all who believed in every generation as God laid the iniquities of us all on Him.

Mary is one of us, folks. She's not to be worshiped. She is one of us. She is a worshiper and she gives us an example of how we ought to worship. She's a model believer. She heard God's Word, she believed it. She acted on it and in response she poured out grateful praise. That's how to live your life as a believer.

Well, Father, thank You again for another passage of Scripture that floods our minds with great spiritual truth. Thank You for Mary, for what an example she was. She's one of us, just like us, singularly blessed...yes, to be the mother of Your Son, but still one of us, a sinner saved by grace and mercy, overwhelmed with her unworthiness, willing to obey Your Word and overflowing with praise. Help us to follow her example. Amen.

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