

**Where Is Your Joy?**  
Luke 1:46-56 (12/02/18)  
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Luke 1:46-56 *And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. 50 "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. 51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. 52 "He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. 53 "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed. 54 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever." 56 And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.*

Sadly, much of the world mistreats and dishonors women. In some cases women may not pursue an education or drive a car. From sexual and physical abuse here in our country to mutilation and honor killing in other countries, women in many societies and religions are treated as second class citizens or worse. That is not how the Bible treats women. God honors women. We as a church see men and women as complementarian. That means men and women complement each other. There are different complementing roles for men and women and marriage and in the church. But both genders are made in God's image and are to be treated with honor and respect. Husbands are to grant their wives honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life.

This morning we're going to spend 30 minutes or so learning from a woman, namely Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is little in the Bible to match the quality and spiritual value of Mary's hymn of praise in Luke 1:46-55. It is absolutely wonderful. J. C. Ryle wrote, "No words can express more aptly the praise for redeeming mercy."

After God told Mary she would conceive in her womb and bear the Messiah, she journeyed about a four-day trip to her relative Elizabeth's house. When Mary greeted her, Elizabeth rejoiced in God, little John the Baptist in her womb leaped for joy, and they had a time of joyful fellowship. With all of this praise and rejoicing fresh in Mary's heart, she gave us this hymn of praise called the "Magnificat." The word "magnificat" is based on the Latin translation of the word "exalts" in verse 46, which in the Greek is "megaluno," meaning "magnify." This is Mary's hymn of magnifying her Lord.

A. W. Tozer wrote, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Well, this hymn of praise is what comes to Mary's mind when she thinks about God, and she thought about God a lot. Her heart was saturated with truth about God and it flows out in sweet strains of God-exalting truths. She knew where her joy was – in God Himself.

Maybe you are struggling with discouragement and you're not finding joy in your spiritual life. Your circumstances or the unknown future are overwhelming you. There is so much to learn from this very young lady in her mid-teens, and especially the source of her joy. Her words tell us her joy was in her God, and that's where your joy and mine needs to be. Let's get our eyes off ourselves, our feelings, fear of the unknown, other people, and our circumstances. Like Mary, let's fix our eyes on our God!

Mary shows us where to find our joy. Her song of praise gives us four helpful principles on how to nurture a sweet but strong, God-saturated, worshipping heart in ourselves so we too find all of our joy in God Himself.

**First, cultivate a heart that exalts God above everything else in your life.**

Luke 1:46-47, *And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*

The first thing Mary mentions is a soul that exalts God. A joyful Christian will cultivate a heart that exalts God and magnifies Him, that sees Him in all His greatness and goodness. In both verses the verbs are first, making the action of the verbs emphatic. Mary is saying, "I emphatically desire to exalt my God because He is great and awesome." The word exalts is present tense, emphasizing the continual nature of her soul's activity. She is always wanting to honor and extol and lift God up! Psalm 34:3 invites others to do this, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!" That's what our church body does each week as we gather and worship our Triune God together.

The Mary immediately and emphatically declares, "Rejoice in God my Savior." Mary may have felt lonely on that long four-day journey from Nazareth to Elizabeth's house. Anxious thoughts may have tried to crowd into her heart and destroy her joy. She may have feared what people would think when she came back later unmarried and yet with child. Like Mary, you and I sometimes find our circumstances can bring a thousand dreadful thoughts to tumble around in our heads. If anxious thoughts came to Mary, they didn't dwell there because she knows her God, and that makes all the difference. Not only does she want to magnify Him in her soul, but in her inner heart and spirit she rejoices with great joy. The word "rejoiced" means to greatly rejoice.

And notice, she exceedingly rejoices in God as her Savior. Yes, Mary freely confessed she was a sinner and needed to be saved. She was no different than you and me who also desperately need a Savior. She wasn't conceived without original sin and she did struggle with the sins of any young girl, just like we all struggle with sins and need to be saved from the guilt of our sin. Mary rejoiced in her Savior. And if you have been saved through faith in Christ, then you too should always rejoice greatly. Paul counsels us in Philippians over and over to rejoice in the Lord. Stop looking at all your issues and problems and worries and anxieties and follow Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice."

Ladies and gentlemen, if you have been made a child of God through your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin's guilt, be like the believers in Acts who went on their way rejoicing, and like Mary who rejoiced in her God and Savior. You and I should be known as a rejoicing people! How do you do that? Never forget that you are a great sinner and God is a great Savior! That's enough to fuel your joy tank every day. Cultivate a spirit of daily exalting and rejoicing in your God.

### **Remember all the great things God has done for you.**

*Luke 1:48-49, "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.*

Mary reflects those two godly qualities of humility and gratitude. These two qualities always live together. She was just a peasant nobody from Nazareth. Although she was in the line of David, her current status was not of royalty. She freely confessed her humble state. She didn't have an overblown image of herself. She wasn't proud and vain and all about herself. But she was exceedingly thankful that her God had taken notice of her.

"Regard" in verse 48 means "looked upon." She could hardly believe it, but God Almighty had noticed her, chosen her, and picked her out of all the Jewish girls of the tribe of Judah. And how does she see herself? As His slave. What a perfect view she had of herself, "I'm just a humble peasant girl who knows and loves and serves my Savior, my God." Mary teaches us to stop thinking so highly of ourselves and get our eyes on our gracious God. Your God takes care of you every day, providing for you, giving you water and air and food. Thank God for all He has given you, all the great things He has done and continues to do for you every day. When you do, your heart will be like Mary's – filled with praise, worship, and thankfulness to Him.

She was very aware of God's grace to her, for choosing her to bear the Messiah. And over 2000 years later all the way down to 2018 through many wild and crazy generations, we still read her story, hear her heart, and consider her to be blessed!

Then in verse 49 Mary announces boldly, “The Almighty has done great things for me.” Can you say this? Has the Almighty God done great things in your life? Remember Gabriel’s promise, “Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary was keenly aware of God’s omnipotence; that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think. In her case, He had done great things beyond causing her to conceive the Messiah, although that would be the greatest. He had noticed her and done great things for her.

Listen folks, we can say the same thing! Our omnipotent God has done great things for us! God noticed you, too, and chose you to be His in eternity past. Why? Pure sovereign grace! What did you bring to the table? Nothing. Yet He placed His electing love and mercy on you and drew you to be His child in His Son. How about you? Has He done great things for you? Has He made you a new creation? Has He given you His Spirit? Has He forgiven you? Has He given you the gift of eternal life? Has He blessed you with a wonderful country, loving friends, maybe family, wife or husband, a job so you can have food and clothing and shelter? Has He blessed you with trials so you learn to cling to Him and find Him faithful? Every good thing comes from Him! “To God be the glory, great things He has done!” (Fanny Crosby)

Do you see how Mary thinks about her God? Remember Tozer’s words, “What comes to your mind when you think about God?” For Mary, it is His grace and power and holiness. His name is holy. She knows her child is holy. I just wonder if she had memorized Isaiah 57:15, “For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, **whose name is Holy**, ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.’” She knew her God as set apart and infinitely holy above all.

**Nurture a biblical view of God in all His attributes – especially His sovereign mercy and justice.**

*Luke 1:50-53, “AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. 51 “He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. 52 “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. 53 “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed.*

How in the world did this young lady, in her mid-teens, ever nurture this glorious and exalted view of her God? Evidently, she was steeped in the Old Testament because her responses are quotes from various Psalms and from Hannah’s hymn in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. She had a right view of God because she knew Him from His Word. Knowing Him requires knowing His Word. Filling our minds and hearts with portions of God’s Word is crucial for being able to respond in a God-honoring way to life situations. We need to be saturated with this high and exalted view of God.

Mary magnifies God’s mercy by quoting Psalm 103:17. She knows He is merciful to those He has given that new heart that fears Him, that reveres Him, that honors and respects Him enough to obey Him. And she has a sense of history, knowing God’s mercy continues to sinners from one generation to another, down through the centuries.

In verse 51 Mary reflects how God rules from His sovereign, powerful throne over all mankind. His arm is the exercise of His powerful, just rule. No one ever gets away with rebellion. God will reverse all worldly values with godly values. He will not tolerate human pride and arrogance forever. He scatters the proud who says in his heart, “There is no God.” Verse 52 teaches God’s sovereignty. He will overturn all the world of arrogance, hubris, godlessness, pride, atheism, oppression, tyranny, cruelty, corruption, and rebellion against Him. True, He hasn’t done this yet, but He will in the consummation when Christ will rule as King. Just like God flicked Nebuchadnezzar into the field and struck Herod Agrippa with worms and he died (Acts 12:22-23), God will flick every proud and arrogant ruler right off his little throne. He will bring them down. Don’t be anxious in this crazy world of ours; know that God rules. R. C. Sproul in his book *The Work of Christ* writes, “Mary understood that if all the weapons of the world were placed in opposition to God, He could sweep them away with one gesture of His mighty right arm.”

He flicks rulers from their thrones, but look what He does for the humble and hungry. He exalts them and feeds them. Where will those who humble themselves before Him end up? At the right hand of God,

ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ. Quoting Psalm 107:9, Mary tells us that only God can satisfy the hungry soul. Blessed are those who hunger spiritually; they shall be filled. And the idea is they shall be filled to overflowing. God is the sufficiency of their hearts. Their hearts are satisfied with Him. Is your soul filled with His grace and mercy? Are you feeding on His goodness? This doesn't mean you're eating steaks and filet mignon and living at a Sandals Resort, but it does mean He'll feed your soul and refresh your spirit with His own presence and joy.

But if God fills the hungry with good things, look what God will do to the arrogant, self-serving wealthy. He's going to send them away empty-handed (vs. 53b). What happens to that "Bigger Barn-Building Fool" in Luke 12? Or that rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16? The rich man lived selfishly in luxury every day while the poor man Lazarus sat at his gate with sores licked by dogs and ate crumbs from the rich man's dumpster. But one day they both died. Suddenly everything was reversed! Now the self-sufficient rich man who didn't need God has nothing but torment, begging for one drop of water to cool his tongue, while Lazarus is filled full of God's good things in Abraham's bosom.

Mary's words are stunning for a 15 year-old teenager. What a model for young girls everywhere. We don't pray to Mary, we don't adore or worship Mary, and Mary doesn't pray for us sinners, but we sure do honor her and learn from her how to find our joy in God alone! She made God the strength and joy of her heart. Whatever may be troubling you right now, learn this: your joy is in the sufficiency of God Himself. He has all sufficiency in and of Himself to accomplish His will for you. Therefore He is able to not only supply all your needs, but will do so exceedingly above all you can ask or think. Go through Mary's hymn in Luke 1 and write down what God is teaching you about Himself through her.

#### **Feed your heart often on God's great promises to His people through the ages.**

*Luke 1:54-55, "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."*

I love this. Mary knew the history of her people. She knew God had promised Abraham a land, a seed, and a great promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. You should know this history, too. It all began in Genesis 3:15 when God promised the Messiah through the seed (child) of the woman. Then He promised Abraham a seed (child) that would bring blessing to the world. This promise or covenant continued through Isaac and Jacob and narrowed to Judah in Genesis 49, and then through David in 2 Samuel 7. Later God promised in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." And now these great promises are being fulfilled in her womb as she carries the seed of Abraham, the son of David, the Messiah, who will bless her people Israel as well as the entire world.

God will never renege on any of His promises. He kept every promise for the first coming of Christ in the fullness of time and He'll keep all His promises to Israel and the Gentiles for His second coming. Romans 11:25-29 tells us that God will yet keep His promise of saving mercy to Israel. They will look on Him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). Today He is gathering out of the nations a people for His name, a people on whom He will have great mercy and will finally gather both Israel and the believing nations together to magnify Him and rejoice exceedingly in His presence forever and ever! Amazingly, this young Jewish girl named Mary is one necessary part in the outworking of God's great plan of redemption.

Mary teaches us where to find our joy. Joy comes not in our circumstances or other people or us, but in the true God. Joy comes when we get our eyes and our hearts centered on Him, knowing He alone can satisfy our souls. Her heart was firmly rooted in the greatness, goodness, and power of her God. He was the source of all her joys and hopes. Your source of joy must be the same place, in Mary's God. That means, like Mary, you must submit your heart in faith and trust in the Savior who Mary is carrying in her womb. Jesus, the God-man, was born into this world to be the Savior of sinners. Is He yours?

Mary's visit with Elizabeth ends here. Luke 1:56, *And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.* The next time we meet up with Mary, she'll be nine months with child and she and Joseph will be on the move from Nazareth to Bethlehem.