

SALVATION'S SONG

Songs of the Messiah from the
book of Luke: Mary, Zechariah,
the angels, & Simeon

The Magnificat Luke 1:46-56



Introduction

What exactly are we to make of the Virgin Mary? Surely she was an incredibly important figure in the biblical storyline and particularly in the story of the birth of Jesus, but what role should Mary play for us in our approach to the Christmas story? More broadly, what role should Mary play in our approach to God and our understanding of our faith?

Perhaps the best way to gain an understanding of what to make of Mary is to look to Mary. What did Mary believe about herself and why God was using her? More importantly, what did Mary believe about God? Our passage today will show us that Mary is not a figure to hold in a position of special importance in relation to how we approach God, but Mary should be our teacher and an example for us in her heart's worship of God. In this passage listen to the song of Mary's heart, and hopefully, the song of Mary's heart will become the song of our hearts as we anticipate Christmas.



Study

Context: Luke wrote this letter to a man named Theophilus in order to give him a narrative of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:1-4). One of the central things Luke believed Theophilus needed to know was the details of Jesus' miraculous birth. In the birth of Jesus God entered the sinful world in human flesh. Theophilus needed to know this. In Luke 1, we find that Mary has gone to spend time with Elizabeth (the woman who was pregnant with John the Baptist), and the two of them rejoiced together in God's faithfulness. Luke recorded this account because he believed Theophilus needed to hear these words—and we need to hear them, too.

Structure:

- I. Mary praises God for His kindness towards her (vv. 46-50)
- II. Mary praises God for His work on behalf of His people (vv. 51-55)



Reflect

Mary praises God for His kindness towards her (vv. 46-50)

1. Read vv. 46-55. How many times does Mary refer to the Lord in these verses? What do these lyrics she sings indicate about her heart posture towards the Lord?

APPLY → Mary's praise of God was based on His work, His power, and His attributes. As you go about the highs and lows of life, why would it be good for you to frequently sing of the nature, power, and faithfulness of God? What are practical ways that you can make it a habit to sing of God's work, power, and attributes to minister to your own heart?

2. In vv. 46-47 Mary sang, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant." Mary, this great model of faithful trust in the Lord, exalted in the Lord from a place of deep humility. Why was humility such a critical factor to Mary being a faithful servant of God?

APPLY → The Lord said through Isaiah the prophet, "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). These words sound simple enough, but we all know that being humble, contrite, and trembling at God's word is easier said than done. What are reasons or factors that lead you to struggle to humble yourself before the Lord? Why do you think the Lord tied the attitude of the heart (humility and contrition) with trembling before His Word?

3. Though the Bible clearly teaches that Mary is not our mediator before God (Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and man), we do see that Mary can be our teacher (like many other Biblical figures can teach us through their obedience). What are lessons from Luke 1-2 that we can learn from Mary?

Mary praises God for His work on behalf of His people (vv. 51-55)

4. Read vv. 51-55. Mary referenced those that the world would deem to be powerful and she repeatedly stated how the Lord triumphed over them. What do Mary's words communicate about her understanding of the wisdom and work of God?
5. God was sending his Son through a virgin who had no power or prestige in the eyes of the world. How did the lowly birth of Christ testify to the work of God in bringing down the mighty and exalting those of humble estate (v. 52)?

APPLY → Mary was likely a teenage, peasant girl; yet she had the wisdom of a seasoned saint when it came to understanding how the hand of God can work in contrast to the ways of the world. How can these words of Mary give hope to your heart as you navigate difficult seasons in which you feel overwhelmed by the world around you?

6. In v. 54 Mary sang that God “helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.” Looking at vv. 54-55 and considering the Old Testament storyline of God’s work on behalf of his people, how was God sending His Son through Mary a testimony to His faithfulness and mercy? (*Consider the Whole-Bible Connections at the back of this study guide*)

APPLY → Read vv. 46-55 again. Mary was an incredibly distinct figure in the Bible (she was the mother of Jesus!), but she also shared common traits with other servants of God (including us!) She recognized that her life was simply to be yielded to God for his purposes. In one sense, Mary was simply another servant of the Lord who faithfully entrusted herself to him. Based upon all of the ways Mary described God in this song, how can you confidently trust the Lord with your life and future?



Connect

Gospel Connections. In Luke 1:50 we read that the mercy of God is for those who fear him. We can easily think of one party fearing another party as evidence of cruelty on the part of the one who places fear in the other person. Base cruelty and violent anger that lashes out produces fear in the recipients of such heinous actions. But Mary sings of a perfect, holy God who pours out mercy upon those who fear him. True fear of God manifests itself in repentance and awareness of the majesty of God. To fear God is to have a proper view of his holiness, and a proper view of God gives us a proper view of our sinfulness. From an awareness of God and an awareness of ourselves, it is then that we can fear the Lord and not find violent anger or cruelty, but we can find mercy from the Lord who pours out mercy upon those who fear him.

Whole-Bible Connections. The Lord told his people in Isaiah 41:8-9 that they need not fear for he would be with them at all times as he promised to their forefathers Abraham and Jacob (whom he renamed Israel). The promises that he made generations and generations ago were being fulfilled—even though centuries had passed and sin had run rampant amongst the people of God. As Mary sang in Luke 1:54-55, God helped his people Israel and has been with them forever. The promised birth of Christ was a direct fulfillment of the promised faithful hand of God.

Theological Connections. We speak of God’s faithfulness often, but this is a term that we can use so much that we lose sight of the magnitude and the hope that lies in the promised faithfulness of God. Confidence in the faithfulness of God does not mean that we have a karmic hope that everything will simply work out. The faithfulness of God to his people is far more precise and far more powerful than

equivocal optimism that things will simply work out in the end. God has promised to work everything in this world for the good of those he has called to himself and given new life to. As he sanctifies those who are his, he is faithfully doing a work in his people of growing them as his people for his glory. The Christian life is a testimony to the faithful hand of God in redeeming and sanctifying a people for himself. Though we look forward to the promised faithful completion of God's work in eternity, we look back to the birth of Christ to see his past faithfulness, the hope of his present faithfulness, and the promise of his future faithfulness.

Praise Connections.

HE WHO IS MIGHTY

Oh, the mercy our God has shown
To those who sit in death's shadow
The sun on high pierced the night
Born was the Cornerstone

Unto us a Son is given, unto us a Child is born

*He Who is mighty has done a great thing
Taken on flesh, conquered death's sting
Shattered the darkness and lifted our shame
Holy is His name*

Oh, the freedom our Savior won
The yoke of sin has been broken
Once a slave, now by grace
No more condemnation

Now my soul magnifies the Lord
I rejoice in the God Who saves
I will trust His unfailing love
I will sing His praises all my days

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