

Intro

You're probably familiar with the magnifying glass. When I worked for the government, co-workers frequently broke out a magnifying glass to read submarine blueprints. The words and pictures were tiny, but I could see them okay. On certain inspections, of welds, pipes, etc. we were required to use a 5x magnifying glass to look for cracks.

Maybe you remember as a kid using the microscope. What a wonderful world it opened up. It made a piece of dead skin or dirt under the finger nails look amazing.

A magnifying glass enlarges the image we're viewing. The picture, the words become bigger. We see what we couldn't see before.

This morning Mary relates her heart to a magnifying glass. As she considers the acts of God, her "*soul magnifies the Lord.*"

When you think about God's actions, what does this do to your heart?

Let's look to Luke to see how Mary's sight can help us treasure God as we should.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

Mary's encounter with Elizabeth gives way to Mary's Psalm-like praise for what God does.

Joy in what God does for his people stands out. Acted for us. Is acting for us. Will act for us.

Basically, this morning, we're going to meditate on reasons why we should be happy about God.

The first point will be the longest.

BIG IDEA: Rejoice in God

Point 1: Rejoice in God because he comes to the aid of the humble (1:48-49, 52-53)

Mary's visit

Hearing word that old Elizabeth was pregnant (1:36), Mary quickly (haste) went to see her (1:39). Mary would have traveled 2-3 days to somewhere in or near Jerusalem. That's where priests lived.

The point is she heard that God worked a miracle for her relative, and she wanted to see it. Mary believed Gabriel when he said Elizabeth was pregnant.

A supernatural encounter

When Mary arrives...

- 1) John the Baptist (in Elizabeth's womb) jumps for joy.
- 2) The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth = the Holy Spirit moved Elizabeth to speak.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

Elizabeth, before Mary says anything, knows someone very unique is in Mary's womb: Jesus.

And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

The Holy Spirit has revealed to Elizabeth that Mary is the mother of Elizabeth's Lord = Mary will be the mother of God. Every other use of "Lord" thus far meant God, meaning calling the baby to be "my Lord" = Mary's child will be my God. No one would know this apart from the Spirit's work.

For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Jesus isn't the only supernatural child. Not that John the Baptist is God, but John is filled with the Spirit in the womb (1:15). Being filled with the Spirit, John rejoices at Mary's arrival. Elizabeth knows why John's leaping because the Spirit revealed this.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Mary believed what Gabriel (speaking for God) said to her. She would as a virgin experience conception by the Holy Spirit and her child would be God the Son taking on human flesh.

Big picture

God is cluing the key characters in on what he's doing. God is ensuring his people understand what he is doing.

Elizabeth's Spirit-prompted speech gives way to Mary rejoicing in a Psalm-like fashion.

*46-49 = Mary personally

*50-55 = how God acts toward believers

Magnify/Rejoice

I chose the theme rejoice. I could have chosen the theme magnify. When you think joy, think magnifying glass. Joy = God enlarged in our heart.

Magnify (1:46) speaks to making greater or enlarging something. Like a magnifying glass enlarges the picture or words we see. In terms of praise, it's paying great respect to God because he's highly valued.

"My soul magnifies the Lord" = my inner being is glad in God.

Rejoice (1:47) speaks to the greatness or intensity of one's joy. It's not the standard word for joy. It's a word used to convey great joy. Overjoyed, extremely joyful, very happy.

"my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" = my inner being is incredibly joyful, happy, glad in God.

Magnify and rejoice are two ways of saying the same thing in slightly different ways. This is what's called similar or synonymous parallelism. The second line says the same thing as the first line in a slightly different way. It's very common in the Psalms and Proverbs.

Soul and spirit are synonymous too. Two ways of describing our inner being, our heart. When Mary thinks about what God's done, her heart overflows with joy. Joy in God overflows when we consider God's actions.

for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

“for” means Mary is explaining why she is so glad in God.

Mary begins with her own experience. Then continues with Israel's experience in the past.

“Humble estate” = someone of low status, someone experiencing humiliating circumstances. Used of Jesus' humiliation at the cross (Acts 8:33) and the humiliation of the wicked rich at the final judgment (Jas 1:10).

Mary was a commoner. As a Jew, she was humbled by living under Roman authority.

Mary views herself as God's **servant**. A servant says to God, “You're my Lord, my master. My life is at your disposal. Whatever you have for me, I'll follow you.”

Mary will be called blessed not because of her own merit or status, but because of what God in his kind intention chose to do for her (1:28, 30).

for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Mary magnifies God in her heart (gives him great importance) because he did great things (the virgin birth). “Magnify” and “great” are in the same word family. **Great things requires valuing God greatly in our heart.**

he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

God reverses roles.

“Humble estate” used of poor believers (Jas 1:9) and spiritually of those who belong to God. Used in James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 when quoting Proverbs 3:34.

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” – James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5

The literal meaning (“low status”) came to mean submission to God, the absence of arrogance, a lowliness before God.

God is pleased to act for those of low status.

he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

The picture is impoverished believers and wealthy people who reject God.

God has reversed roles in the past by coming to the aid of hungry believers. This is how God conducts himself. This is why Mary's joy in God is great.

Application

Mary's example prompts us to question ourselves.

- 1) Do I have a lowliness before God?

Lowliness in terms of knowing our role. God is on the throne, not me. Lowliness in terms of merit. I could do nothing to merit God's forgiveness, his adoption, eternal life. I need a Savior (Jesus Christ, the baby in Mary's womb) to perfectly keep the law and die in my place. I need Jesus to suffer in my place and take the punishment I deserve. If we're ever to receive it, the gospel must humble us.

Lowliness in terms of spiritual progress. Any spiritual goodness (character, wisdom, purity) is a result of the Spirit reshaping my heart.

Point 2: Rejoice in God because he's merciful to those who fear him (1:50)

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

Mercy = acts of kindness to someone in need. Used of the Good Samaritan's actions in Luke 10:37. Mercy was expressed to a man beaten and left for dead on the side of the road in binding wounds, providing pain relievers and disinfectants (oil and wine), and paying for shelter (inn). My point? Mercy is kindness in action. Interestingly, this is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word for "steadfast love" in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint).

1) This mercy is conditional.

God's mercy rests on those who fear him. Fear meaning a respect and honor that flows from trust. Fear = Old Testament speak for saving faith. Trust leads to humble submission, following Jesus.

If you've trusted Jesus and repented of your sins, God's mercy rests on you.

2) God's mercy, or steadfast love, is a constant ("*from generation to generation*").

God's mercy isn't a one-time past or future event.

If you fear God, God's mercy is with you right now. God is acting kindness upon you throughout your days, which includes right now! We are needy, so God acts for us.

As an example, God acted for Mary and Israel and the world when the Holy Spirit conceived the God-man, Jesus Christ.

3) God's mercy doesn't end.

4) God's mercy is available right now.

God requires that we turn from rebellion and self-sufficiency (pride) to trust and submission (humility).

Point 3: Rejoice in God because he punishes the proud (1:51-53)

God helps the humble by acting against their oppressors. Think Israel in Egypt (see Exod 1-3). Pharaoh enslaved the Jews, the people were being beaten, and newborn males were being killed. So Israel cried out to God for rescue. God saw. God heard. God acted.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. – Exodus 3:19-20

At the Red Sea, God “*threw the Egyptian forces into a panic*” (Exod 14:24). As God repeatedly executed judgments on Egypt, the proud Egyptians (Pharaoh and his servants) were scattered in their thoughts as their pride and gods were confronted with God’s strength.

he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

The mighty God brings down mighty men. The powerful are powerless when God decides to act. God reverses roles in history. God reverses roles at the end of time.

Think God humbling Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar.

he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

This happened at the exodus.

And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²² but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.” – Exodus 3:21-22

“Scattered...brought down...sent away empty” speak to past acts. God’s past acts spark present joy!

Rejoice in God’s rule.

Objection:

- 1) I was in a humble position when my father, relative, neighbor, family friends abused me.
- 2) I was powerless. God didn’t act for me.
- 3) God is his wisdom and free will chose not to.

This is reality. God didn’t act for his apostles when they were put to death.

- 4) What we know. God acted for you at the cross.
- 5) God’s acting to restore your heart right now.
- 6) God will act against your abuser at the day of judgment. If your abuser repented and believed, God’s wrath against your abuser was poured out on Jesus.

Point 4: Rejoice in God because he remembers his promises (1:54-55)

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Israel was created by God to serve God. Israel was supposed to say, “You’re our God, our master. Our lives are at your disposal. Whatever you command of us, we’ll do.”

God helped Israel repeatedly. The Exodus, helping Israel after repeated failures in Judges, rescuing Hezekiah from Assyria, stirring Cyrus to send the exiles in Babylon back to Jerusalem.

Why did God help them? There’s more than one reason. But here it’s because he spoke promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. Promises that were expressions of God’s kindness to needy people (mercy). Promises like...

- 1) A great nation

- 2) In Abraham all the nations will be blessed
- 3) The promised land (in this age and for all eternity)

(see Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-20; 17:3-8; 22:16-18)

Helped here isn't just Israel's distant past. God's helped Israel by the virgin birth. Sending the Messiah who will reign forever. Sending the Messiah to save sinners from the punishment their sin requires.

The help extends beyond Israel. It's through Jesus, Abraham's descendant, that all the nations will be blessed. Through Jesus, we have an eternal promised land.

In the virgin birth, God remembered his promises!

God has acted for us. God is acting for us. God will continue to act for us. That's why Mary's excited.

Point 5: Rejoice in God because he saves sinners (1:47)

Maybe you notice Mary called God "my Savior" in 1:47. Savior would surely carry some reference to rescue from foreign oppressors like Rome. Gabriel had told Mary that Jesus would reign on David's throne forever. Meaning Israel would come out from under Gentile rule.

But given Old Testament promises like sin remembered no more (Jer 31:34) and a suffering servant (Jesus) who would suffer God's wrath against sin in place of the people (Isa 53), Savior wouldn't be limited to political rule.

Mary saw herself as a sinner in need of God's merciful pardon. She too needed forgiveness of sins.

When Mary calls God "my Savior" she speaks to her own personal need. Ironically, the only way Mary, a sinner, could be pardoned by a holy God is through the child in her womb. Jesus had to go to the cross to die in Mary's place, taking the wrath she deserved, because of her sins.

Non-Christian

Mary rejoiced in God because he pardons sinners. God pardons sinners through Jesus. If you recognize your sin and your need for a Savior, turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus. Admit your sin. Ask for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death. Trust God's promise that whoever believes is saved.

Conclusion

Rejoice in God.

- 1) **because he comes to the aid of the humble**
- 2) **because he's merciful to those who fear him**
- 3) **because he punishes the proud**
- 4) **because he remembers his promises**
- 5) **because he saves sinners**

Do you see what Mary sees?