

Mary's Song

Luke 1:46-55

Born in 1865 in Ireland Mary Mallon immigrated to the United States around the age of 15. Like many women immigrants, she took up domestic work to earn a living. Soon she found that she had a propensity for cooking and began to hire herself out as a cook. In 1906 she was hired by a New York banker for the summer to work as cook at a cottage the banker was renting. By August, 6 of the 11 people living in the home had become sick.

Fearing that they would never be able to rent out their home again due to the outbreak of illness, the owners of the home hired an investigator to determine the source. Through investigation they were able to trace that illness broke out everywhere Mary had previously worked. There were multiple encounters with Mary Mallon in an attempt to get blood, urine and fecal samples from her to determine if she was in fact the carrier of this disease. Each encounter was met with great resistance and even physical assault by Mary on her would be captors. After alluding authorities for several years they were able to subdue her with the aide of policemen.

Getting the necessary samples and running subsequent tests each week for a period of time they were able to confirm that Mary was the carrier. After two years of isolation the New York Department of Health set her free on the condition that she never work as a cook again. For a time she honored that agreement but eventually went to work at a maternity hospital where an outbreak of the disease occurred. They were able to trace it back to a recently hired cook by the name of Mrs. Brown – aka Mary Mallon. She was then sent back to North Brother Island where she remained in isolation for 23 years until her death. Though never contracting the disease herself, she was non-the-less a carrier and infamously dubbed Typhoid Mary.

Of all the names given to girls born in the United States, the name Mary still ranks as number one with approximately 3,991,060 bearing that name. In case you are wondering, Patricia comes in second with 1,628,911.

Most women named Mary aren't as famous or infamous as the case may be. There were a number of women of royal descent named Mary. The best known perhaps is Mary I of England, better known as "Bloody Mary." It was she who brought about the restoration of Roman Catholicism in England and the subsequent deaths of 280 religious dissenters who were burned at the stake during the Marian persecutions.

Another royal figure named Mary was Mary Queen of Scots whose father, King James V, died when she was just 6 days old. Mary was crowned 9 months later to succeed her father.

Of the many Mary's with royal descent perhaps the best known yet most obscure was Mary the mother of Jesus. That she would be blessed by generations to come is evident even through the naming of girls after this most cherished among women in history.

That the Lord exalts the humble is clearly evident in this wonderful account of Mary. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Luke 1:46-55**.

This morning I would like to focus our attention on this anthem of praise offered by Mary while visiting her cousin Elizabeth.

*She praises God for His blessings on her
She praises God for His blessings on the humble
She praises God for His blessings on Israel.*

I. SHE PRAISES GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS ON HER – v. 46-49

Mary was from a humble family with humble means and humble upbringing. She lived in the town of Nazareth. When Nathanael would later ask

if any good thing could come out of Nazareth, he was not speaking just of their crude dialect or lack of culture. There is some evidence that Nazareth was also in disrepute by its neighbors because of a laxness in morals and religion.

Through Scripture we learn that Mary was from royal descent. Like her fiancé, she too came from the lineage of David. Yet her home was not the splendor of Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel that rose above the surrounding terrain. She did not walk palace halls lined with marble columns or cedar walls, nor did she have servants attend her every need. The fine linens of the east did not fill her wardrobe nor was she scented with the perfumes of Egypt. Hers was a humble estate. Crude walls of rough cut timber and plaster with a thatched roof was her home. Farm and field were the aroma surrounding her. She knew only calloused hands and dirt roads instead of soft skin and cobbled streets. Nazareth itself sat in a basin hidden from view as one scanned the countryside.

She was a peasant girl of no more than 13 or 14 years old, as most scholars believe. It was not uncommon for girls to marry at such a young age. Yet we see in this passage a peasant girl adorned both wisdom and godly character that were far beyond her years.

When the angel Gabriel came and announced to Mary that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Christ-child, she wondered at the miraculous hand of God that would be required to make such an event happen. She noted that she was a virgin having never been intimate with a man. The angel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. That's a good reminder for us as well.

Chuck Swindoll has written "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as an impossible situation."

Becoming pregnant without a physical relationship with a man was in her mind, impossible – but not with God. God was asking this young teen-aged girl to trust Him with the impossible – to trust Him with not only the pregnancy but also to trust Him with the gossip this would certainly follow her and the reputation of being branded as a loose moral woman and liar. She faced scorn and humiliation. Yet her response was trust and obedience - **"I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said." (1:38)**

Herbert Lockyer writes "Among all the godly Jewish maidens of that time in Palestine why did God select such a humble peasant young woman as Mary? Her choice by God to be the mother of the Incarnate Son is as mysterious as her conception of Him within her virgin womb. When the fullness of time had come for Jesus to be manifested He did not go to a city, but to a remote and inconsiderate town – not to a palace but a poor dwelling – not to the great and learned but to lowly partisans – for a woman to bring the Savior into a lost world. The gentle and lowly Mary of Nazareth was the Father's choice as the mother of His beloved Son, and that she herself was overwhelmed at God's condescending grace in choosing her is evident from her song of praise in which she magnified Him for regarding her lowly estate, and in exalting her."

God in His infinite and unfathomable wisdom chose Mary and she rejoiced that she would be considered among all the virgin women of Israel to be the mother of the Messiah. Prophets Isaiah and Micah both wrote centuries earlier of the humble nature in which the Messiah would be born.

What is our response when the Lord asks us to do something that we think is impossible? Are we willing to submit to His work in our lives and watch Him do the miraculous? Mary was. Can we give praise that He chose us for a particular task? Mary did.

As she visited her cousin who confirmed that she was in fact carrying the Christ child, she broke out into this song of praise and worship to God. God was about to change the course of human history through the son Mary would give birth to.

She first speaks of God's blessings to her. She speaks of her soul magnifying or glorifying the Lord. She realized that He alone was worthy of praise. Truly the nature of her praise embodies the truth of Jesus' words when He would say that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. **John Piper comments that "the only people whose soul can truly magnify the Lord are people like Mary, people who acknowledge their lowly estate and are overwhelmed by the condescension of the magnificent God."**

David would ask **"What is man that You, God, would consider him?"** **Who are we that the living, holy God should take notice of us or consider us?** Were it not for God taking an active interest in us, were it not for God's love toward us who were His enemies we would forever be lost in our sinful condition. But God's love could not leave us in that condition, so He came in the person of Jesus to provide a way back to Him.

At an early age, in spite of her humble dwelling, she had been taught the Scriptures and her song is filled with a knowledge of the Old Testament. She had a godly upbringing and a godly character to match. *People, if there is anything you can take from the example of Mary it would be this, immerse yourself in Scripture. Let it saturate your heart, mind and soul so that when something occurs by the hand of God you both recognize it and naturally fill your mouth with praise to Him as you walk in obedience.*

Now I want you to notice what Mary states about herself in this passage. You need to notice that Mary identifies herself just as you and I – she was a sinner also in need of a Savior.

v. 47 "my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

In that one statement she was not stating that God was now saving her from a life of relative obscurity, or a life of physical pain and suffering, she was claiming that even though she was going to give birth to the Messiah, like everyone else, she was a sinner and needed a Savior. She understood that salvation is only possible through God and that now the promise of the long-awaited Redeemer was here. Old Testament saints looked forward to their salvation through the Messiah that was promised to Adam and Eve and typified in the Passover supper. We look back to the coming of the Messiah and believe that He came in the person of Jesus born to this humble maiden who had come to save the lost.

She is not, as some believe, to be venerated and exalted to a position co-equal to God Himself, and characterized by absolute sinlessness as He is. **H.A. Ironside states that "She had no extra-ordinary righteousness that elevated her to a higher status than the rest of us."** Like salvation, that God chose her to be Christ's mother was by His grace alone.

That we should commend her and admire her for being chosen to carry the Christ child and for courage under great difficulty to come is obvious, but never forget that she was just like us – a sinner also in a need of a personal Savior. She was not chosen because she was sinless. **William Hendrickson notes "Her conception had been brought about by God's holy power, utterly separated from the sin and sinfulness of men."**

Alexander MacLaren writes "Mary sees in the great wonder of her son's birth the accomplishment of the hopes of ages and an assurance of God's mercy as forever the portion of His people."

Her soul glorified God because of the Savior that was to be born through her and because He was her Savior.

Not only does she identify herself with sinners in need of a Savior, she also identifies herself as a servant of the Lord.

v. 48-49 “for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is His name.”

A servant is someone who takes on tasks that has been assigned to them. We see a willing spirit to shoulder the responsibility of being the mother of the Messiah. She realized that God had a special part to play in His overall plan for Redemption and she willingly accepted that role.

There are two important truths that we need to remember. The first is that God is working out His plan for the world and those plans include the salvation of as many as would believe in His Son. There isn't anything or anyone who is going to thwart those plans.

II Peter 3:9 “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

The second truth to realize is that each of us has a special part from God to play in His plan for the world. Mary's part was to be the mother of the Christ-child. Your part might be to witness to a co-worker or classmate or neighbor or relative that Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, is the avenue to bring salvation to them.

I shared with some of you an email I received recently from a classmate who through a very traumatic event that occurred on the farm where he worked almost 2 years where he almost lost his life; that he put his trust in Christ as Savior. He wrote to tell me the good news and to thank me for those many years ago sharing my faith with him.

We each have a part to play in God's redemptive plan by spreading the good news that the event we celebrate called Christmas is about God's gift of the Messiah given to us so that by believing in the

finished work on the cross He would endure 33 years later would buy for us salvation.

May was a humble and willing servant, eager to do what her Lord was asking of her in His grand plan.

Are we as willing?

But take note of this: there was a price that Mary had to be willing to pay. Most, would not believe her story. Even though they knew the Old Testament prophecies, why would God choose such a lowly place and inconspicuous young woman? She would also come to know the reality of Simeon's words when he proclaimed that a sword would pierce through her own soul (2:35). Not that she would die by the sword, but that she would suffer anguish to the very core of her being watching her son beaten and crucified.

Yet in spite of the challenges, she was willing to bear the burdens and her soul worshipped God. She looked beyond her own plight and saw the power of God, the mercy of God and the holiness of God. This bubbles up inside her and spills out in an anthem of praise that God would take notice of and use a poor nobody from the perspective of the world, but in God's eyes she was being invited to play a huge role in His plan to save the world.

Like Mary, have you come to the place where you wake up in the morning and ask God what He has going for the day because you would like to be a part of it? Don't make God part of your plans, you become part of His. Make your life count for something in respect to His redemptive plan for people you know. Rejoice that He desires to use each of us in His plan.

Mary praises God for His blessings on her.

Mary praises God for His blessings on the humble.

II. MARY PRAISES GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS ON THE HUMBLE – v. 50-53

In **verse 48** God is mindful of us.

In **verse 49** God is mighty toward us. He does things in us a through us that only He can do.

In **verse 50** God is merciful toward us, but not just to anyone. He is merciful to those who fear Him. We have learned that fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. Here fearing God leads to His mercy and notice the extent of His mercy. It is everlasting. It will never end. His mercy is consistent with His character. It will never change.

Lamentations 3:22-23 “The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By His mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each day.” (NLT)

Through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord reminds us that He is merciful. Through Malachi God exclaims that He does not change.

Mercy is simply God withholding what we deserve. We deserve the punishment for sin that we have coming to us, but through our faith in Christ He withholds that punishment. We are unworthy and undeserving, but God’s mercy stemming from His great love sees us in our plight and keeps back His punishment. Mercy is God providing for the need of sinful man.

Mary recognized that through this child she was carrying, God was extending His mercy to us providing for our need as sinners. Mercy does not save though. We are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Louis Sperry Chafer writes “Mercy only provides a Savior and draws the sinner to Him. God’s mercy alone goes out to every living creature.” His grace is only on those who believe.

His mercy stems from a heart of compassion which moved Him to provide a Savior for the lost. If God were able to save an individual on the basis of His mercy alone, then all would have been saved and the death of Christ would have been unnecessary. God’s mercy was not enough to bring us to Himself,

He also demonstrated grace so that on the one hand His mercy withholds what we deserve, but by His grace He gives to us what we don’t deserve. *We don’t deserve eternal life, but because of His mercy toward us and His love for us, He gave to us a gift that is only by grace through faith in this child whose birth we celebrate at Christmas who eventually would die the death we deserve taking our punishment.* Grace is not given to all, but only to those who believe in faith.

Mary praised God that His mercy extends to the humble of heart and that it is forever.

Mary praises God that He is merciful.

Mary praises God that He is mighty.

He is able to give mercy to those who fear Him.

He is able to exalt the humble.

He is able to fill the hungry with good things.

That is His mighty arm. He is mighty to do great things, to do miraculous things.

Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah, Lord God, behold You have made the heaven and the earth with Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Mary had already been informed by the angel that God can do the impossible and He chose to exercise that right with Mary by conceiving the Messiah in her.

Let us never forget that nothing is impossible with God. Perhaps the only thing that limits God is our own inability to take Him at His word in not believing that He is the God of the impossible.

Jeremiah 32:27 “I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”

Will you agree with Mary that He is mighty and then in response for the great things He has done voice your praise to Him?

God is not only mighty toward the humble; He is also mighty toward the proud and arrogant. He is able to scatter the proud. He is able to take the mighty from their throne. He is able to send the rich away empty. He is able to bring down the proud of heart.

Peter reminds us that **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** He further states that when we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt us in due time. **(I Peter 5:5-6)** We can either come humbly before God or be humbled by God. Scripture abounds with examples of both.

A proud person will never be saved, because they rely on their own merits. The humble recognize they are sinners and in need of a Savior who offers eternal life. God is not impressed with the rich or the powerful. He does not exalt those who exalt themselves. He is not predisposed to favor the ones we tend to elevate to lofty positions. His favor is toward the humble of heart.

Mary praises God for His blessings on the humble.
Mary praises God for His blessings on Israel.

III. MARY PRAISES GOD FOR HIS BLESSINGS ON ISRAEL – v. 54-55

In this song of joy to the Lord, she notes that *God’s promises are faithful and that His promises are forever.*

Back in Genesis God made two promises to Abraham. The first was that he would become a great nation whose population could not be counted. It would be like counting the stars in the heavens or the sands on a beach. His offspring would be without number. Throughout history though, many have attempted without success to eradicate the Jews. Pharaoh didn’t, the Babylonians couldn’t, Haman couldn’t, Antiochus Epiphanies couldn’t, Hitler couldn’t, and neither will Iran or any other

nation. God’s promise to Abraham as noted by Mary in her song conveys the truth of God’s promise to him that God will **“help His servant Israel.”**

The second promise that God made to Abraham was that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. That blessing would come through the child Mary now carried in her womb. The culmination of that blessing is found in the last book of the Bible.

Revelation 5:9-10

We are blessed through the seed of Abraham born to Mary and this blessing would be forever. The blessing is not just in the child, but in the sacrifice that one day He would make so that by faith we could have eternal life. God will not one day rescind His offer of salvation by grace. He will not change His mind that other criteria is now required to appease Him so that He might extend the offer to any who might meet those new conditions. Mary notes that this promise is forever and God is faithful to keep His promise.

It was the day after Christmas at a church when the pastor noticed that the baby Jesus was missing from the manger scene that had been set up inside the church. Hurrying outside he noticed a little boy pulling a red wagon and in the wagon was the figure of baby Jesus. Walking up to the boy, the pastor asked where he got his passenger. The boy responded that he had gotten him from church. The pastor then asked why he took him from the church. The boy explained that a week before Christmas he had prayed to the little Lord Jesus and told Him that if he got a red wagon for Christmas he would give Him a ride around the block.

Kids know the importance of keeping their promises, so does the Lord. He wrapped up His promise in the arms of a young woman named Mary who gave God praise that He is faithful to always do what He says.

With what praise will you celebrate Christmas with this year? Why do you celebrate what many call a holiday, but what we know to be a holy day?

The headline read “Japan goes wild for Ho-Ho-Holiday.” A nation, made up almost entirely of Shinto and Buddhist followers, has taken to celebrating “Kurisumasu” with the heartiest of Ho-Ho-Ho’s. The season is marked by extravagant gift giving, with shoppers lined up for blocks outside of expensive department stores.

Red-garbed choirs give enthusiastic if uncertain voice to “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” and other Christmas carols in downtown Tokyo. In residential sections nearly every doorway bears a Christmas wreath or a smiling Santa Claus.

Yet, no one seems to have a clue why Christmas is celebrated at all in a nation where Christians account for less than one percent of the population. Nevertheless, only New Year’s is as popular a holiday among Japanese as Christmas.

A telling comment is made by Hatsuko Yamauchi, a 75 year old homemaker who has happily celebrated Christmas for several decades. He said, “I do not know what Christmas is all about. My daughters heard about it and wanted us to celebrate, so we put a Christmas tree in the living room, a flower pot shaped like Santa in the entryway and have a nice time. Isn’t that what Christmas should be – having a warm time with family?”

In Israel, the nation that gave us Christ there is another sad story. On December 25, 1990, Christmas day, Israel passed a law stating that no Messianic Jew could immigrate to Israel and become a legalized citizen. Messianic Jews rest on the Sabbath, they keep kosher, they fast on Yom Kippur, and yet they have been an unwelcome people in the nation they would call their home. It’s called the “Law of Return” which guarantees citizenship to all the world’s Jews defining a Jew as

someone born to a Jewish mother or someone who has converted to Judaism.

But Messianic Jews are not welcome for one reason – they worship Jesus Christ. They believe that Christ was the Jewish Messiah and that He will come again. The Supreme Court of Israel ruled that belief in Jesus as the Messiah is incompatible with the Jewish faith, and therefore with Israeli citizenship. Here’s the strange thing about the law. It does not require Jews seeking citizenship practice Judaism or even believe in God. You can be an atheist, an agnostic or even hold some new age ideas and become a citizen but not if you believe in Jesus the Messiah.

How sad it is that many in our nation are like those in Japan who have no understanding of why God had to send His Son in the first place as the reason we celebrate Christmas. Without Christ there is no meaning to Christmas.

How sad it is that Jews who love the Messiah believing He has come and that He will come again are denied citizenship in their home land.

How thankful and filled with joy we should be that we have a citizenship in heaven that is assured us because of this child that was born some 2000 years ago so that by faith in Him brings with it the promises of God.

God had a plan for Mary.

God had a plan for the world.

God had a plan for Israel.

Mary praised God for His plan.

He has a plan for you. **Will you be a willing servant and obey His call on your life, rise up and give Him praise?** Let God put a song in your heart.