

Mary's Faith Song

Texts: Isaiah 61:7-11

Galatians 4:4-7 (Series B, 12th Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 34:1-9 (Mother of Our Lord).

Luke 1:46-55

Let us pray: and Introduction

For the past few weeks our Gospel texts have been dealing with Love for our neighbour and faith in God. In today's Gospel Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus brought it home in a beautiful rendition.

There's something unique about Mary. I'm talking about the song titled "Magnificat," named in Latin thousands of years ago because the first word of the song is "magnify." It is the original work of an unmarried teenage peasant girl who just found out she is pregnant, a girl we know as Mary. Now, most young unwed girls don't burst into song when they hear news like that. But there was something unique about Mary that made all the difference.

Mary had learned to trust God beyond the bottom line. The profile of Mary is buried between the lines of the whole story. Mary had been raised in a poor, but godly home, where life was hard but God is good. When she heard she was to be the mother of the Messiah, she didn't know how it would turn out for her, either in her present or future.

She simply heard the angel say, *"For nothing will be impossible with God"* (v. 37) and answered with total readiness, *"I am the Lord's slave,"* said Mary. *"May it be done to me according to your word."* She had learned through the hard times that God was faithful, and trusted God even though she didn't fully understand.

Let's add the subtitle, *Undeserve Grace* "God's Gift, Delivered in Person." Pay careful attention to the simple words of this teenage girl and you will be kept from error in regard to Mary. Notice her self-description as she praises God:

1. She calls Him God my Savior in the opening line of her song. Only sinners need a Savior. Mary sees herself, not as the offspring of an immaculate conception, where she was born without a sin nature, but as a sinner like all the rest of us in need of rescue.

2. She sings of God looking on the humble condition of His slave. Literally, she sees her littleness, both in the world's eyes and in God's. Her words tell us that Mary felt totally unworthy to be chosen of God, just another poor girl among thousands who live poor lives in the backwater towns of a captive nation.

Mary was struck by how different God's choice is from how we human tend to choose. I have discovered that there's always a single question that arises in the heart of a person who understands how much grace it takes for God to chose them: "*Why me, O Lord? I know my own sin, my own fallibility, how fickle my heart is and how perfect You are.* So how is it that You would chose the likes of me?"

Mary felt that question. *Listen, humility and lowliness* are the abiding marks of someone who has stood in the presence of God long enough to realize that they deserve hell for their sins, but instead receive mercy.

3. Mary sees God's actions toward her as evidence of His mercy. She sings that His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him. That's Mary's poetic way of saying, "God, you didn't give me what I deserve. Instead, you showed me mercy, withholding your judgment, just as you do for all who fear You."

We see something wonderful and true about God in her song: God loves the *underdog, the disqualified, and the unimpressive*. Mary stands before the Lord just like we do - needy, flawed, with nothing to merit His favor, nothing to earn anything but judgment. She is amazed at a God who knows her so well and chooses her anyway. So am I.

Here's a gift you won't find anywhere else - the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ, who has come for you and me. In the next rendition Mary turns her attention to this world system and interprets the meaning of Christ's coming for this Earth.

'Rescuing Power' "God's Strength Changes Everything." Mary sings of radical reversals from what our world values, shifting everything we try to establish so that it magnifies God's justice for His people. Three groups of people will be impacted.

1. He will rescue the helpless, v. 51

He has done a mighty deed with His arm; He has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts." Now Mary is just a young girl, not a political analyst. She is standing in the living room of an older relative in the hill country of Judea, singing a song. But she saw it coming. Her boy-child will up-end all the centers of power men have established on this earth.

This baby is God's signal to power brokers at every strata of society: the end of human *self-important* and *self-centered ambition* is at hand. But when we think of how many overpaid sports figures, and how many haughty business executives, and how many self-consumed celebrities, and how many prideful political leaders have, in their bloated self-conceit, tried to arm-wrestle with God, and in doing so, walk over people, I think of this verse.

Listen, if we are all caught up in this world's values; if we are fresh out of options this morning; if we feel that we have been dealt a crumby hand in life, then I have a message for you: Bring your case to the Almighty God and don't make fame or wealth your great goal.

Don't despair over which party wins the most seats in parliament. Don't lose sleep over how unfair your boss treats you. And don't foam over how wronged you have been in your life. Let the song of Mary comfort you: God's just letting the powerful strengthen their position and exhibit their puny influence for a little while.

But one day, God will say, "Enough!" One day, "justice will flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream" (Amos 5:24), washing away the wrong and setting all things right. Bring your case to the Almighty. He is the Helper of the helpless.

2. He will exalt the humble, v. 52

He has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly."

"Nebuchadnezzar" was the most powerful man on earth in his day, and he knew it. Daniel 4 details the sudden and stunning toppling of this mighty man.

When God's judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar was lifted, the former king immediately declared the truth: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of heaven, because all His works are true and His ways are just. And He is able to humble those who walk in pride." (Dan. 4:37)

How many times has the Lord deposed the Herods, and Hitlers, and Idi Amins of the world? He breaks their bows. He blasts their projects. He brings them low. And the meek end up inheriting the earth.

Mary's song means we need to reverse our ambitions if we want to succeed in God's world. Don't buy the hype this world system dishes out that says if you're going to get anywhere in life, you've got to be assertive, stand up for your rights, blow your own horn, and pat your own back!

There's a higher law at work than the "law of the jungle." Jesus gives it to us: "*Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*" (Luke 14:11).

So seek humility, not glory. Labor for the Lord, not yourself. Stop caring who gets the credit. Give without expecting anything in return. Take the back seat. That's the path to greatness in God's Kingdom. In Isaiah 66:2, God said, "*I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and who trembles at My word.*"

3. He will fill the hungry, v. 53

He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent away the rich empty." God is looking for people who are hungry for Him; He passes right by the *self-sufficient*. What did Jesus say? "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, because they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6) That's why 1 Cor. 1:27-29 says, "God has chosen the world's *foolish things to shame the wise*, and God has chosen the world's weak things to shame the strong.

God has chosen the world's *insignificant and despised things* - the things viewed as nothing - so He might bring to nothing the things that are viewed as something, so that no one can boast in His presence."

The church of Jesus Christ is for people who feel their own emptiness. That's the kind of people God is looking for. He loves the *forgotten*, the *out cast*, and the *passed over*. He pledges Himself to those who know that they are the *handicapped*, the *nobodies*, the *losers*.

He shows mercy to those who don't deserve it, he chooses the lowly over the proud, and he finds the hungry and fills them. God is on the side of those who can't take care of themselves.

On the cross is the strongest man who ever lived who died for us, Jesus Christ. We can't make it through eternity without him. Having Jesus as our own Saviour. His work...his way within us.

A willing vessel can be a powerful tool in God's hands. We will be amazed what God can do with lives that are devoted to him in prayer and service. The Lord's work must be done the Lord's way. The Lord's work must be done the Lord's way.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name...The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness. (Psalm 103:1, 8) Amen.

Let us pray: Holy and Living God, burnish, brighten, and fill us with Your holy fire, to shine within us and transform our thoughts, words, and actions into continual, awe-filled, living worship. We ask through Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant; and the Holy Spirit, our Divine Sanctifier; who together with You, reign as One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Prayer concerns: *Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen, Sved BergSun Shine Song, Soo Young, Ann Jensen, Susan & Mark, Glenn Cleaver, Ellen Dahl, Wilhelmina Tiemersma, Keith Coomb, Tabita Waco, Dini De Vrie, Astride Hylland, & Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers.*

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **Lord, Enthroned in Heaven Splendor # 475**
- **Lord God, We Praise You # 558**
- **When Peace like a River # 785**

Birthdays

Mehrnoosh Shakiba

Wedding Anniversary

Amir and Sanaz

August 21, 2022