

Mary's Song

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Date: 01 December 2013

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[0 : 00] We're starting Christmas, being the 1st of December, that means there's about 23 sleeps until we get this Christmas time on the road where we get our turkey on, where we get our Brussels sprouts on, and we're going to take the whole month of December to look at the songs in Luke's Gospel about Christmas.

We called it Christmas Hits. I called it Christmas Hits, it wasn't a democracy. And today we're looking at the first one, the one that Mary sings.

But I want to ask you, when do you sing? When do you yourself sing? In the shower? I sing in the shower? I think that's probably the reason Aileen moved to Brussels.

Sing with the hairbrush in front of the mirror? Maybe in the car on the way to work? On the terraces? Do you support Airdrie United?

By yourself? In the karaoke bar at the Christmas party? Maybe on the street in church? Or when no one else is around?

[1 : 17] When do you sing? Why do you sing? Some people sing laments. Got it in the Bible, we looked at it yesterday.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. Song about sadness, a lament. Some people sing romantic songs.

The lady in red is dancing with me. There's nobody else here. Just you and me. Some people sing victorious songs.

Championnes, championnes. Ole, ole, ole. I put that on the screen just in case now you've got your own white paper, you thought you were going to get ideas ahead of your station. Some people sing joyful songs.

I'm H-A-P-P-Y. I'm H-A-P-P-Y. I know I am. I'm sure I am. I'm H-A-P-P-Y. Yet more often than not, I guess we find ourselves singing worship songs.

[2 : 26] So we get to the beginning of Luke's gospel. Luke, a doctor, who's carefully investigated the life of Jesus. And the first two chapters read like a score of a Gilbert and Sullivan musical.

There's a bit of narrative and then someone will break into song. And there's a bit more narrative and someone will break into song. Today we're going to look at the first song, the song that Mary sings.

A worshipful response to the unprecedented favor, attentive care and outrageous grace she has been shown by the God of the universe. It is a joy-filled, praise-home, God-focused, cosmic chorus of true worship and kingdom insight.

Mary sings a biblical, theological, soteriological, doxological, canticle about the majesty, might and magnanimous nature of God.

After his introduction to Theophilus, that's verses 1 to 4, Luke zooms in on an old barren couple. A couple called Zechariah, who is a priest, and he's got a wife who's old, and they have no children because she is barren.

[3 : 42] And while Zechariah is taking his turn on duty in the temple, he's waving a grain offering before the Lord, and an angel speaks to him. God hasn't spoken for 400 years.

If you weren't here yesterday, you'll have trouble remembering that. If you were here yesterday, no problem. God hasn't spoken for 400 years. No angels, no miracles, no fresh revelation.

But this day, the divine dialogue restarts, and the angel comes and speaks to him and says, your wife is going to have a baby. Elizabeth's been barren for years.

Zechariah says, how do I know that's true? And the angel says, you'll be struck dumb until this boy is born. Zechariah finishes his stint in the temple.

He goes home. Elizabeth becomes pregnant. He goes south to Judea in the hill country where they live. And Luke, then, chapter 1, verse 26, goes six months forward and 80 miles north to the despised Galilean town of Nazareth.

[5 : 02] And Gabriel comes to a girl. He's probably about 14 years old. And he speaks about another miracle pregnancy.

This time, the pregnancy is not miraculous by overcoming age and barrenness, but quite the reverse. Overcoming youth and virginity.

Mary, the highly favoured, the one who has received great grace from God, in being given this unique task, is told that her son is to be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

He will be son of the most high God. He will reign on David's throne over the descendants of David and his kingdom will last forever. Mary, unlike Zechariah, believes and submits to this outrageous plan and says, I am the Lord's servant.

May your words be fulfilled. Then, in chapter 1, verse 39, we get these two women meeting. Mary travels 80 miles to see Elizabeth, her relative.

[6 : 17] Mary is in a privileged position. She's given this unique task, but she's also in a precarious situation because she could, her engagement could finish, her reputation could be soiled, she could be thrown out of the family house, she could even be killed, according to Old Testament law.

It is not normal for 14-year-old girls to say they are incubating God, having immaculately conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. No one does that. It's not normal.

That is enough to get you called a lunatic by onlookers, a harlot by your fiancé, and worthy of death by the religious establishment. However, in visiting Elizabeth, Mary gets all the encouragement that she needs to know this is God's plan.

She gets three signs. She gets her personal sign. She sees Elizabeth put on a bit of weight. It's not because she was having an early Christmas, because Christmas isn't invented.

It's because she's pregnant. She's six months pregnant. She gets her physical sign. She gets her physical sign as fetal John the Baptist leaps for joy when brought into proximity with the zygotic Jesus.

[7 : 37] That was my favourite line from the sermon. It's downhill from here. Mary also receives a prophetic sign because Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, confirms everything that she knows to be true.

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear. But why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me? She's got great confidence.

And now we're going to read the bit. Luke chapter 1, 46 to 55. And this is what it says. Let me show you the outline so you can be looking for it as we go through. We see Mary models kingdom worship.

Mary testifies to kingdom dynamics. That's the two things I want you to look out for. And this is what I want us to take away. We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's Saviour.

We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's Saviour. Karen's going to read this for us. Chapter 1 verse 46.

[8 : 45] Mary said, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. 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. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has remembered his servant Israel remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever even as he said to our fathers.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. Let's pray. Father God, speak to us. We pray. Speak to us in a way we can't dismiss.

[9 : 48] In a way we can't forget. Father, speak to us that we might once again see the glory of your gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The first thing we see is that Mary models kingdom worship. It is possible, isn't it, to sing the right song in the wrong way. So I was at a youth camp.

14, 15 year old boys. I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. As they sing it, no joy. Sung in completely the wrong way or I don't know if you saw last week the England under 15 football team played a match in the victory shield.

Wasn't many people there watching. They sang the national anthem. I have never heard the national anthem sung like that. Supposed to be this vitriolic call to rally for the country.

They sang it like they were whistling a tune they didn't like on the bus. I was speaking in Dorchester at a church and I think the average age of the congregation was about 81.

[10:57] I took one of my friends who was leading worship and he thought we were saying did you feel the mountains tremble? And we got to the chorus which says oh I feel like dancing.

I have never seen people look less like they were feeling like dancing in my life. Mary sings the perfect song in the perfect way.

And the first thing why do I keep doing that? The first thing we see is that Mary's song is informed. See this from the first three verses. None of Mary's lyrics are original.

She has borrowed the entire content of her song from the Old Testament. If we take just the first three verses she explicitly quotes seven verses from the Old Testament.

She quotes from the law the prophets and the Psalms. Her entire song is modelled on the song that Hannah sings in 1 Samuel chapter 2. We know Mary was young we know Mary was poor but we must also conclude that Mary was saturated in scripture.

[12:03] That when this good news came to her a volcanic eruption of scripture erupted deep down in her soul and overflowed from her mouth. This is a real encouragement to internalise, memorise, meditate and hide scripture in our hearts.

That we would like Mary's parents give our children scripture morning, noon and night three square meaty meals a day. Let us unleash the word of God to do the work of God in our lives and in the lives of the people that we're seeking to shepherd well.

Let us be those like Mary from whom scripture oozes from every pore. Let us be those who respond to God who reveals himself explicitly in scripture to us.

Have you ever thought for example that the Psalms are God giving us songs to sing back to him? Have you ever thought about that? God says here's a song book and I want you to use these songs to sing my praises.

That's amazing. Mary's song is sung perfectly with the right attitude because it is informed. She knows the God she's talking about. Let us be praying the scriptures, singing the scriptures, pouring over the scriptures, sharing the scriptures, encouraging each other with the scriptures.

[13:24] Like Mary, let us not worship God glibly or ignorantly. Let's worship God informally. We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour.

The second thing we see, Mary's song is internal. See the words that she uses in the first two lines. My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

Soul and spirit are deep internal things. You don't put a new pair of trousers on your soul because it's deep in the inside.

True worship is deep crying out to deep as we imbibe the resonant hum of creation praising its creator. nature. And when we're talking about worship we're talking about a deep thing.

We're talking about an internal thing. We're talking about something on the inside out than something that we take in from outside.

[14:35] We live in a wafer thin culture that is about appearance, strap lines and sound bites. Mary shows us that our worship is never to be superficial or skin deep.

Mary models for us that true worship is in to out inside to outside the heart response being the source of everything.

That means my praise and worship is never dependent on the music the lighting the amplification the ambience. It is dependent solely on the inclination of my heart towards the God of the universe. It is about the posture of my soul and my spirit. It is about what is going on deep down inside. Mary sings the perfect song in the perfect way and we this morning can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour.

thirdly we see Mary's song is intense. Look at that verse in verse 46 my soul glorifies the Lord.

[15:43] Does anyone have my soul magnifies the Lord in their Bible? That is because it is literally the Latin word that we get the word magnification from.

Mary is saying my soul magnifies the Lord it is an intense experience. it is from the word magnificat that we get the word magnification and I think this is a great description of what is going on here. We use the word magnification in two ways don't we? We magnify something in a microscope that is taking something very small and blowing it up so that we can see it.

That is not what Mary is doing. We also use magnification for a telescope where we take something that is enormous and vast like the moon or the stars but it is far away so it looks really small.

So we magnify it through a telescope so people can see it and go wow the moon is huge. Wow Saturn has got some massive rings. that is what Mary is doing.

[16:55] Mary is taking the person work majesty dominion and sovereignty of gods which is vast and magnifying it in her life so that people can see what God is like and how glorious he is.

She is intensely mirroring the magnitude of God for others to see and learn from. That is what we're called to do Brunnsfield not just on Sunday but as we go out into our lives we are called to magnify the Lord.

Because lots of people in this city don't know God. They don't know the Lord Jesus. And he's far away. He doesn't mean anything to them.

And so you are a telescope. And what you're doing is you're focusing in on the Lord and you're magnifying him in your soul. And people go wow.

I didn't realize he was so big and so beautiful and so gracious and kind and loving and good. Mary's worship is intense. She sings the right song in the right way because she knows God.

[18:05] She's trusted God. We can only sing Mary's song if we've trusted Mary's saviour. And then lastly she models kingdom worship because her worship is indefinite.

The first verb glorious in the original Greek is present continuous. It is something that's happened, happening and going to happen into the future. Her worship is not restricted to this song.

She is a worshipper with all of her life. The second verb is rejoices or whatever you've got in your version. question. In the original Greek it is the aggressive aorist.

Your question what is the aggressive aorist? I can see it on your lips. The aggressive aorist is something that begins now and continues forever.

And Mary's worship is indefinite. It started, it's happening and it will go on forever. That's what she's singing. She sings the right way with the right attitude.

[19:18] Just a side note. Look at what she calls God in verse 47. And my spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

The fact that Mary calls God her saviour completely flies in the face of any assumption that Mary is sinless, divine or a co-redemptrix with Christ.

Mary here says I'm a sinner and I need a saviour. I'm sinful and I need a rescuer. She's in exactly the same position as us but she is a glorious model of what we're supposed to be.

Mary models kingdom worship because her worship is informed, she knows the scriptures, internal, it's happening deep within, it's intense because she's magnifying God and it's indefinite because it will go on forever.

We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour. And then let's look at the content of her song, Mary testifies to kingdom dynamics.

[20:26] Mary also gets the gospel, she understands the upside down nature of the kingdom that her unborn son will usher in.

Mary testifies that God dwells, God dwells irreproachably but acts personally.

Look at verses 49 and 50. Look at how Mary describes God verse 49, the mighty one, the one whose name is holy.

Mary testifies that God is perfect and omnipotent. omnipotent. He is glorious and irreproachable. He is bigger, superior, above, and infinitely more than anything we can understand.

God who is utterly perfect and set apart from the world, that is what holy means. The unfathomable God who created the cosmos by listing a few nouns is a God who is and should remain inconceivably and unapproachable by sinful people.

[21:37] Mary says God, he is the mighty one. He is the holy one. But look at what he says. She says, for the mighty one has done great things for me.

Look at verse 50. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. Yes, he is big and glorious, holy and irreproachable, and yet he's personable.

He does things for us. He shows mercy to me, and not just to me, but from generation to generation and all who will turn to him.

Fear here is as reverent seriousness and heartfelt dependence. God dwells irreproachably as the mighty one whose name is holy, and yet he acts personally by doing great things on our behalf and extending mercy to us, the unworthy.

Mary gets the gospel. Mary, we can sing, we can only sing, I thought I would have known it by now, we can only sing Mary's song if we've trusted, if we're trusting Mary's saviour.

[22 : 53] We also know that she gets the gospel because she says, God exalts the humble but scatters the proud. Look at 51 and 52.

He has performed mighty deeds with his army, he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts, he has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. will. This is God's glorious plan, this is the way that God always operates. The nauseating pride of rebellious humanity incurs wrath and judgment from the God who is worthy and yet to those who are meek and respond in submissive humility and awe are blessed and exalted.

Wasn't that the case? You can tell I did a Bible overview yesterday. Wasn't that the case on the plains of Shinar? that humanity said I want to build a tower to be like God that reaches to the heavens?

I don't need God anymore. What does God come down and do? He scatters them. Because he scatters the proud. Or what about Moses and the Pharaoh?

[24 : 05] Pharaoh in God-like fashion says I'm going to enslave this people in order that they can facilitate my own hubris and be brought into worshipping me. Moses the shepherd from Midian comes and is the instrument through which God humiliates the Pharaoh by utterly decimating him and showing that he is mightier than all the gods of Egypt.

God scatters the proud but he exalts the humble. Or Saul the king, no heart, head and shoulders above everyone else.

I am the big cheese. His knees knock at facing Goliath and he ends up committing suicide. And his whole household is destroyed.

God scatters the humble. And little David who wasn't even invited to Israel's Got Talent as Samuel comes to anoint the kings is actually the one God's chosen to be king.

God exalts the humble but scatters the proud. Do you see the gospel isn't for good people who want to add a little religion to their lives, who want a little Jesus on the dashboard of their car.

[25 : 32] God the gospel is for repentant sinners who know they deserve nothing and therefore through faith in Christ are able to receive everything.

It is the ones who realise they are sick who will go to the physician of souls and find healing for their lives. People who are proud have no room for God.

People who are humble and desperate say God I need you. Do you see they have pride in their inmost thoughts? That deep down inside it is them that they're worshipping. And yet Mary will say my soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices in God, my saviour. Mary gets the gospel. We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour. Thirdly, God fills the hungry and empties the rich.

Mary is not here talking about physical hunger but spiritual hunger. In a few chapters Luke will relay a sermon that Jesus gave on the plane to the watching world and he would say blessed are those who hunger now for they will be satisfied.

[26 : 50] We read about a man, you're going to read about him just after Christmas, a man called Simeon who is old and what it says about him is he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. That word waiting is literally the word hungry.

He was ravenous for God to come and do something in his world. Those who know they are incomplete without God find themselves filled by God whereas those who are full of everything else remain ravenously restless.

That's all over the gospel. Jesus makes us aware of our blindness and then gives us sight. Jesus makes us aware we are wrong and then he puts us in the right.

Jesus makes us aware we are lame and then enables us to walk. God creates in us a hunger and then fills us with his goodness. So I'm working in my office, concentrating on what I'm doing and the time goes by.

1.30 comes, Graham knocks on the door. Have you had lunch? Didn't even think I was hungry. hungry. The minute he says have you had lunch?

[28 : 00] I am starving. I don't think I'm even going to be able to make it to Greg's for a nutritious and delicious lunch. I didn't even realize I was hungry.

Then I go to look for sustenance. We read the Bible and all of a sudden we read a forgiveness in Jesus Christ and we've never really thought about being guilty but now it's on our mind.

We read of the peace that Jesus brings and it is then we see how restless and chaotic everything in our life is. We read the Bible and we read about life in all its fullness and it's then that we realize how drab and mediocre and soulless our existence is.

God fills the hungry but those who are self-satisfied, self-reliant and seemingly self-sufficient will get to the end of their lives and realize that they are in fact impoverished without the Lord Jesus.

We can only sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour. And then lastly before we finish. God keeps his covenant but extends his parameters.

[29 : 21] Look at these last two verses. He has helped his servant Israel remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever just as he promised our ancestors. Mary now brings us to the Old Testament characters of Israel and Abraham.

The figureheads of all that it means to be God's chosen people. Abraham the pagan moon worshipper who is met by God and transformed into the progenitor of a great nation.

And Jacob the twisted wrestler who wrestles God and is given a new name and great blessing. The people on whom God has set his affection when he related to them through covenant and promised blessing if they obey and cursing if they disobey.

Yet we know the story. You especially know the story if you were here yesterday. Think I could make that clearer. Despite prophets, priests, kings, miracles, battles, signs, symbols, oracles, parables and patience, Israel categorically failed to keep the covenant and fell short of its requirements.

God's chosen people had categorically come under God's curse on account of their unfaithfulness. Yet see these verses, God remembers mercy. And see how it overflows out of Abraham's descendants forever.

[30 : 42] Now, how much Mary knew of this, of what she is singing about, but inspired by the Holy Spirit, she alludes to the truth that in Jesus, the true and better Israel, there is absolute covenant faithfulness leading to the availability of unqualified covenant blessing.

Israel messed up and they should have been cursed. And yet Jesus came as the new and better Israel. He came and kept the covenant. He came and did all that God required.

He was the only person who loved the Lord his God with all his soul. So, heart, soul, mind and strength for all of his life. And yet he dies on a cross and he does that for us that we might get all the blessing through him that Old Testament Israel was promised.

Christ. It is this Jesus that God's people are now found in. It's not about covenant blessing being ethnically Jewish. It's not about speaking Hebrew.

It's not about living in Israel. It's about being found in Jesus Christ and having life and forgiveness, joy, peace, eternal blessing offered unconditionally through faith in Jesus Christ.

[31 : 57] We can only tune our hearts to sing Mary's song if we're trusting Mary's saviour. She gets kingdom worship.

She understands kingdom dynamics and sings again and again about the gospel. And so must we. We must be those who worship God.

Informally. Intensely. Indefinitely. Internally. We must sing of the gospel.

Throughout all of our lives when the world squeezes in. Sing the gospel louder and prouder. Not quieter in the closet. We can only sing Mary's song if we've trusted Mary's saviour.

Let me pray. Father God, we want to worship you as humble worshippers.

[33 : 06] We want to worship you in the way modeled to us by your servant Mary. We want to sing informed, internal, intense and indefinite worship back to you because you have been so good to us.

We want to sing of your grace to us in the gospel. The gospel that will turn this world upside down and has turned our lives upside down. Father God, thank you for Jesus our saviour.

and we pray that we might sing Mary's song as those who have trusted and are trusting and will always trust Mary's saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.