

THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS: The Magnificatⁱ Luke 1:46-56

WELCOME:

Good morning, Trinity! It is so good to see you this morning. And I want to say a special welcome to those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled you have joined us today.

We love to connect with guests. You can help us know about your time with us today in a couple of different ways. You can text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword to that number, you will be sent a link back that is safe to click on. It will take you to a short form. When you fill out and submit that form, it notifies us and we look forward to the opportunity to connect with you.

Or you can stop by Guest Connect located in the main lobby just outside the worship center. We have a team of people that would love to meet you and give you a small gift as a token of thanks for you being here with us today. Even if you text in, stop by Guest Connect and pick up your gift. We are so glad you are here today.

SERIES INTRODUCTION:

Before we jump in this morning, I want to say a special word of thanks to Aaron Blankenship for preaching last Sunday. Did he not do a great job? I am so very grateful for Aaron and his willingness to be used by God, his ministry, and his encouragement. Grateful for you, bro!

Today we are beginning a new teaching series that we are calling “The Songs of Christmas.” The Christmas season is well underway, and it is, as the song goes, the most wonderful time of the year! And with Christmas comes parties, lights, and festivities. But the most iconic part of Christmas, at least to me, is the music. I love Christmas music. There’s just something about it that gets you in the Christmas spirit.

I came across an article that ranked the 50 best Christmas Carols of all time.ⁱⁱ On that list were songs like “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “We Wish You A Merry Christmas,” “Angels We Have Heard on High,” “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” and “Hark The Herald Angels Sing.” But according to this article I read, the number one Christmas Carol of all time is, “Silent Night.”

I was kinda bummed. I mean, I love “Silent Night,” but I really love to hear to Nat King Cole sing “Joy to the World,” or Bing Crosby sing “Do You Hear What I Hear.” Those made the list by the way, but not quite number 1.

I think I speak for most of us when I say that we love hearing Christmas songs on the radio. But the songs of Christmas are not just contemporary culture tied to present day. The Songs of Christmas that we are going to study this season date back 2,000 years. And over the next few weeks, including Christmas Eve, we are going to look at the original songs of Christmas, beginning today with Mary’s Song, or as it has been labeled, The Magnificat.

So, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1. We are going to be zooming in on verses 46 through 56 this morning.

MESSAGE:

Now, if you are wondering where you’ve heard Mary’s Song called the Magnificat, it is steeped in Church history. Magnificat is the Latin word for the first word in Mary’s song.ⁱⁱⁱ In verse 46 of Luke 1, Mary said, “*My soul magnifies the Lord.*” Magnify being the English word for the Latin, Magnificat.

This morning, I want us to think through three aspects of Christmas as revealed in Mary’s Song. We are going to see that Christmas brings hope, worship, and faith. That will be our outline this morning as we discover the components of Mary’s Christmas Song.

The first thing that is pointed out is that Christmas brings...

1) Hope.

One of the first things that becomes evident when reading through Mary’s Song here leading up to the first Christmas, is that it is laced with hope. I want to read it in its entirety and then look into each of the components. As I read, you follow along in your copy of God’s Word and see if you can hear the hope filled chorus. Luke 1, beginning in verse 46.

⁴⁶And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those

who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

The hope that we see in this song of praise really comes to life when we think about the context that leads to its composition. The historical context of this passage is what really highlights the beauty of it. And to understand it, we have to view it through the same lens Mary did, the totality of Israel's history.

Mary makes mention of Abraham and God's promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. That God was calling him to follow Him to be made into a great nation. Well, the hope that God was going to make good on his promise had all but faded by the time Mary arrived on the scene.

Think about what Israel had experienced dating back to their time of slavery in Egypt. After 400 years of slavery, a glimmer of hope sparked. God used Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. But that was short lived because of a lack of faith in God's plan, the people had to wonder in the wilderness for 40 years. But then hope returned when Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land. For the most part all went well as God set up a Theocracy where He ruled through judges instead of kings.

But then the people demanded a king. They wanted Saul and that ended terribly. But hope was restored when king David took the throne. And God made a promise to king David that He would establish his throne forever. And following David was his son Solomon and together they ruled through the golden years of the nation of Israel.

Then Israel divided into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom is called Israel, and the southern kingdom was called Judah. Then comes a series of exiles. The northern kingdom captured by the Assyrians. Then the southern kingdom conquered by the Babylonians. Then comes the Persians. The Israelites return to their land, but they are ruled by the Persians. Then the Greeks overtake the Persians. And eventually, the Roman empire reigns and rules. But all throughout that time, God sent prophets reminding the people of God's promise of a Messiah, a Savior, and the coming of an eternal Kingdom.

For example, a popular Christmas passage is Isaiah 9:6 and 7 which read, *⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Passages like these were Scripture that people held onto counting on God to come through. But by the time first century B.C. arrives, there had been 400 years of silence from God.^{iv} No movement on the eternal Kingdom front, no Messiah, no prophetic word. And as we can imagine, this would have led to an overwhelming sense of hopelessness pervading the Jewish people. They have been longing for God to act. Reading, re-reading, memorizing, quoting out loud key Old Testament passages talking about God's promise to deliver. Generations wondering if God was ever going to make good on those promises. Prayers being offered with the words, "But God, You said..."

Can you feel it? Ever been there? The silence is deafening. [Long pause]. This is what the people were feeling. It's what Mary was feeling.

And then, Luke 1:26, God speaks, to Mary, an obscure teenager, probably around the age of 13 or 14^v, engaged to a man named Joseph. The angel Gabriel comes to her in verse 28 of Luke 1, *²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

While the text goes on to tell us that Mary was, of course, perplexed by this news, it still filled her with hope. Why? The long-awaited Messiah was on His way. And God was going to fulfill His promise through her. Which is why her response in this song is verses 46-49, *⁴⁶My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble*

*estate of his servant. For behold, from now on **all generations will call me blessed**; ⁴⁹for **he who is mighty has done great things for me**.*

Christmas brings hope because of the news of the coming fulfillment of God's promise. Secondly, Christmas brings...

2) Worship.

After the angel spoke to Mary, she went to go visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Why would Mary go immediately, as the Scripture says, and visit Elizabeth? Well, who else would understand but Elizabeth.

See, Elizabeth had become pregnant with John the Baptist in what was a miracle, not because it was a miraculous conception, but because she was advanced in age. But Elizabeth would be able to understand where Mary was coming from unlike anyone else.

Plus, Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, a priest, was visited by the angel Gabriel, the same angel that visited Mary. So, being knowledgeable of the prophetic Scriptures, and having experienced God in very similar ways, they would have been able to confirm that this indeed was God at work. Further confirmation came when John the Baptist, in Elizabeth's womb at the time of Mary's arrival, leapt in the womb because Mary was carrying Jesus.

So, what was Mary's response after taking everything in? Worship! She erupts into song. She has no other response but to praise God. In fact, the subtitle in my Bible is "Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat." The first song of Christmas was a worship song written by Mary.

Listen to Mary's words again. ⁴⁶"My soul **magnifies the Lord**, [That's worship!] ⁴⁷and my spirit **rejoices in God** my Savior [worship], ⁴⁸for he has looked on the *humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed*; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty **has done great things for me** [that's the reason for worship], and **holy is his name**. Do you see the incredible expression of worship? The season of Christmas brings worship.

Now, I think it is very important to point something out here. There is a great theological understanding and misunderstanding wrapped up in these verses. Some have taken verse 48 and applied a form of deity to Mary. They would say, Mary is blessed, and the instruction is to bless Mary from generation to

generation. But that is a misinterpretation of what she is saying. No where in this song does Mary magnify herself. She is not highlighting anything magnificent about her. The spotlight all throughout her song is on The Lord. She says phrases like, "Magnifying The Lord. He has done great things. Holy is His name. His mercy, His strength, His help, His promise." So, to take Mary's statement, all generations will call me blessed and apply it to her having a divine status is a misunderstanding of the context.

So, what does Mary mean when she said, "*from now on **all generations will call me blessed***." Well, the word translated, "blessed," in the original language literally means, "to pronounce happy," or "to consider fortunate."^{vi} In other words, Mary considered herself fortunate to get to be a part of God's redemptive story. It is to say that people from now on are going to say, "Look at how blessed Mary is in God allowing her this privilege."^{vii} Mary is saying, "Wow! I get the privilege of birthing the Messiah." So, as you can see, there is no command here to ascribe higher value, nor power or status bestowed upon Mary. The object of worship is God for all He has done.

Christmas brings hope and worship. Thirdly, Christmas brings...

3) Faith.

One of the things that is perhaps most striking about Mary's Song here in Luke 1 is her knowledge of and recitation of Scripture. This is indicative of Mary's faith, her trust in God and His Word. A couple of points highlighting this point.

First, she demonstrates a knowledge of the Scriptures. In verses 53 through 55, she sketches Israel's history. Now, keep in mind, Mary is 13 or 14 years old. And it is very obvious that she knows her Biblical History. She says, "⁵³*he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴**He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.***" Mary is talking about the Abrahamic Covenant and recalling the specific ways God had worked in Israel's history up to that point. She understood the gravity of God's promise to Abraham. And as a result of her knowledge of Scripture, Mary had developed a profound faith. Remember, she has no access to a library, no Wikipedia, but she expresses knowledge more vast than a lot of theologians.^{viii}

But in addition to her knowledge of the Scriptures was her application of them. We see that in her word choice in the composition of her praise song.

Scholars have pointed out that her song is filled with Old Testament passages and certainly echoes its teachings. The word of God had become so central to her that it came out of her.

Mary seems to repeat parts of Hannah's prayer. Remember from our study in 1 Samuel, chapters 1 and 2, where Hannah had prayed for a son and God worked in a miraculous way to provide her Samuel. So, in a very similar way, God had work in Mary to miraculously cause her to carry The Lord, Jesus. So, echoing Hannah's prayer was very appropriate. But in addition to the prayer of Hannah, Mary also drew upon the Psalms and the prophets.

Let me show you some of these references that point to Mary's faith and her application of Scripture.^{ix} She starts off with saying her soul magnifies The Lord, which is an echo of Psalm 34:2. In verse 47, she said, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior, which echoes Isaiah 45:21. In verse 48 Mary says, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant," which is the same sentiment that Hannah expressed in 1 Samuel 1:11. In verse 49, she points out that God, "has done great things for me," which is contained in Psalm 126:3. And the proclamation, "holy is His name," comes from Psalm 111:9.

Mary had developed a tremendous faith that was bolstered by her understanding of God's Word. And that is exactly how we develop a deeper faith in God. The urging is to know God and His Word, The Bible, in such a way that when He works we easily recognize it. So, Mary demonstrated her faith in her knowledge and recitation of Scripture.

But Mary also demonstrated faith in her trusting in God's plan. There were a million reasons for Mary to doubt God and her situation. Think about all the reasons she had to doubt. We read in Luke 1:27 that Mary was betrothed to Joseph. In Jewish tradition, there were two phases to the wedding process. The first phase is a betrothal phase. This was a 12-month preparation time where the couple was formally engaged, and the only way to break the engagement was through a legal divorce. So, a betrothal was much more than our idea of engagement. Then the second phase to a Jewish wedding was the ceremony and the coming together as a family.

So, Mary trusted God's plan even though she risked divorce. Not only divorce, but public humiliation in being labeled an adulterer. She risked being

discredited. You're pregnant? And claiming to be a virgin? There were so many things stacked against Mary, yet I want you to see her faith, her trust in God.

Turn back to verse 37 of Luke chapter 1. The angel Gabriel says, "*³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.*" *³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*" Now that's faith. "Okay God! Joseph may divorce me, but I trust You. I will be humiliated, but I want to please You and not people. They are going to discredit me, but I trust You, God, to work according to Your ways, not my own."

Hebrews 11:6 says, "*⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him [God], for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*" That's Mary, believing in God's work, seeking Him, drawing near to Him, trusting His plan.

And you know this couldn't have been easy for Mary. Trusting God is never easy. He calls us to step out on faith, to trust Him and His provision, and walk obedient to His Word. The call on Mary here in this text, is really the same call of God upon our lives. We are called to trust Him, no matter the circumstances.

Mary's Song, the first song of Christmas, the Magnificat. A beautiful picture of Christmas bringing hope, worship, and faith.

CONCLUSION:

What about you? Christmas presents you with an opportunity to be filled with hope, worship, and faith. We can be filled with hope because Jesus has come, but He has also saved.

The Bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The effects of that falling short is devastating. But the Good News of great joy is that God has seen us in our helpless estate. He has sent His one and only Son, Jesus, who lived a sinless life but died a sinner's death. And in Jesus' death, He took our place and a demonstration of God's grace. And by way of faith in His death, burial, and resurrection, we can be forgiven of our sin and enjoy a relationship with God.

INVITATION.....

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ *Works consulted in preparation for this message:* Thabiti Anyabwile, "Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke," Holman Reference: Nashville, 2018; David Guzik, "Enduring Word Commentary: Luke 1 – The Birth of John The Baptist," accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke-1/>; John MacArthur, "Mary's Praise," sermon published by Grace to You, March 28, 1999, accessed online: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/42-14/marys-praise>; Skip Heitzig, "Expound: Luke 1:26-80," message taught at Calvary Albuquerque, July 9, 2014, accessed online: <https://connectwithskip.com/teachings/#/series/186/sermon/2488>; Brad Gray, "Proclamations of Christmas: Mary's Song," published by Walking The Text, accessed online: <https://walkingthetext.com/episode-181-proclamations-of-christmas-pt-1-marys-song/>.

ⁱⁱ Vanessa Hall, "Carolers Rejoice, This List of 50 Christmas Carols Will Have You Ready to 'Go Tell It on the Mountain'!", published by Parade, September 16, 2024, accessed online: <https://parade.com/living/christmas-carols>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnificat>

^{iv} For a more detailed survey of the History of Israel, see Bible Gateway's article online: <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/History-Israel>.

^v MacArthur.

^{vi} Strong's Concordance, 3106, makarizó.

^{vii} Taken from Heitzig.

^{viii} Adapted from Heitzig.

^{ix} Taken from MacArthur.