December 6, 2015 **Luke 1:46-55**

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 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 helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Right after Mary had become pregnant she made an 80 to 100 mile journey from Nazareth to visit Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea. I am under the assumption that Joseph didn't even know she was pregnant until she returned three months later. I wonder who she told, if anyone, that she was leaving. Imagine any young woman - perhaps about 16-17 years old - taking such a journey that would take three to four days.

Immediately after she arrived at the door of her much older relative Elizabeth, Elizabeth exclaimed,

> **"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!**"

Now call to mind that Mary would have had no contact with Elizabeth prior to this. Yet Elizabeth knew that Mary was pregnant with HER LORD. (Isn't that a testimony in itself to the divinity of Jesus?) And look at what honor she gives the much younger Mary. She felt honored that Mary visited her because Mary was carrying God in her womb. Elizabeth also praised Mary for her faith. This whole story sets the backdrop for Mary's song.

We don't hear a hint of fear or trepidation in Mary's words over what was about to come. Mary's song is just filled with pure joy - joy over what God has chosen to do through her; even though she would spend three months from home and her whole life would be changed. It stands in contrast to the modern American who views Jesus as a distraction to life. Even just one hour a week seems much too intrusive. Many would rather keep him at arm's length - perhaps enjoy a Christmas letter from Him but no more. Maybe treat him like a neighbor that you occasionally say "hi" to and shoot the breeze with, while keeping away from any engaging subjects like hell, sin, death and the like. Imagine having Him grow inside you then - feeling him kick you and move around inside you; perhaps making you sick and giving you a bad back. Imagine being asked to raise him and feed him and clothe Him. This was not just a National Guard / weekend warrior type of thing. Mary was being called on to bear the Messiah. Yet her response is anything but "woe is me." She is glad to be chosen by God and used to carry the Savior. God knew she would welcome the opportunity to carry the Savior in her womb and raise Him.

Mary's Song is a Song of Joy

I. Based on the Word

It's interesting to note how Mary's words are very similar to Hannah's words that she used when she found out that God was going to give her a baby boy named Samuel. It shows us that Mary was a student of the Word of God. She used the Old Testament in her song just like Jesus spoke the psalms from the cross. What we hear from Mary is an informed faith of a young Jewish teen who knew her Bible well. Her words reflected God's Word; they showed a humble faith. That's what happens when you indulge yourself in something. You become very familiar with it and you maybe even begin to mimic its words. This is why we study the Word.

Let's focus now on what Mary actually said. **From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.** Mary didn't say that she would be called "blessed" because of her great faith or her willingness to carry the Savior. She said that she would be blessed because of the great things the Mighty One would do for her - things that deserve praise.

If you read through her words you can think of a variety of stories in the Old Testament that she may be referring back to. For instance, she said that God "**scatters**" those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. Think of the Tower of Babel. In the early history of humanity men decided to build a tower to the heavens in order to build a name for themselves. They ignored God who told them to fill the earth. So God changed their languages, and in so doing they naturally stopped building the tower and scattered through the earth.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. One of my favorite stories is when Nebuchadnezzar was bragging about how he built his kingdom and God caused him to go insane to where he thought he was a cow and was eating grass in the field. (Daniel 4) In Acts 12 King Herod took praise from people who were saying he was a god. The word says, "**Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died**." The book of Esther has a wonderful story of how Haman wanted to eradicate all of the Jews. However, in a twist of fate God used Esther to save the Jews and exalt Mordecai to power instead.

He has filled the hungry with good things. One of the most memorable stories in the book of Exodus is how God fed the Israelites for 40 years in the desert with miraculous manna from heaven that formed on the ground every morning. Another example is of how Elijah fled from Queen Jezebel and was fed by God on the way to Mt. Carmel. At a different time he was fed by the ravens during a drought. All of these examples showed a God who especially cared for His people in a time of need by doing great things.

II. Focused on Jesus

How does her song come to a crescendo? **He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."** All of these great things that God did through the Old Testament had one main purpose - to keep His promise to Abraham. Abraham was promised that the Messiah would come through him and that "**all nations will be blessed through you**." Mary was honored to think that after all of these years of promising a Messiah to the Israelites, that the Messiah was in HER womb. God was growing in her womb. The Savior of the WORLD was inside her. She would get to hold him and nurse him and raise him. She would have the perfect child who always did what he was told. What an honor!

With this great honor and blessing Mary would witness the greatest mercy of all. She would see her Son dying on the cross for the sins of the world. She would hear Him proclaim "**It is finished**." The sorrow of it would be that this was her Son whom she raised. It would be like a sword going through her soul. But after all of that pain she would also see Him rise from the dead. By seeing this she would be filled with the greatest thing of all; the mercy of God in the person of Jesus; the forgiveness of sins from her own Son and Savior. Mary's song was full of joy because of what God would do through her Son. She was focused on salvation.

III. What is your song?

This song is beautiful. It is in contrast to all of the people who are so miserable in our world. They are singing songs of romance and joy that they hear on the radio, yet they are so miserable for so many reasons. There is this "pursuit of happiness" out there by demanding my rights, rights to free healthcare and sex with whomever I choose whenever I want. Did gay marriage make them happy? No! Now they want transgenders to be accepted and celebrated. And what will it be after that?

It's not only them. Think about how you raise your children. You want your children to be successful and get jobs they enjoy. You want them to be in good and well balanced marriages where they can get along with their spouses. You want them to be active and succeed in their passions. So you put all of this time and effort into driving them here and there and buying them this and that. But they still aren't happy, and neither are you.

Think about you. Will you be happy when you get married? When you have children? When you get a raise? When you retire? I doubt it - not entirely. And you wonder why not? Have you forgotten that you live in a world that has been cursed with sickness and death? Have you forgotten that God has put consequences to sin in this world? Have you forgotten that there are angry demons prowling around that want to hurt you? Why should you be immune from it? How could you find lasting joy in such miserable conditions?

But Mary did! What was it that made Mary so joyful? Here she had been uprooted from her home. Her fiance was about to find out she was pregnant. She had walked two to three days on foot to visit Elizabeth. But she was full of joy. Why? Because she was listening to the Word. She was focused on the God who had promised her one main thing. He had promised her a Messiah would come through the Jews. Now He had come through her. She had salvation from her sin. She had the promise of eternal life.

Mary said that this kind of joy doesn't usually come to those who are happy and successful. It doesn't come to those who are given everything they want. It comes to those who have been humbled by the disappointments in life and shown how far they have fallen short of what God has demands. They realize that true and lasting joy just can't be found here. They have to look to the Messiah and beg for mercy. So in an ironic way the only way you can find this joy is when you are miserable. Maybe instead of praying for success and happiness in this world you should pray for sorrow and humility. The reason even Christians are so miserable today is because they aren't looking deep enough to Jesus. They only want Him to enhance their love lives or give them some parenting tips. They are aiming for the very things that often separate us from Him. They aren't getting on their knees and saying, "Have mercy on me a sinner."

We just started the season of Advent and a new church year. Did you know that? There is one main purpose in this church year - to look at Jesus. So we start out our year by preparing to see His humble birth in Bethlehem. Why? Not so that He can set up a kingdom on earth, but so that He can die on the cross for our sins and rise from the dead.

Mary's song of remembrance was filled with joy because she remembered the heart of what God called the Israelites for - to give birth to their Messiah. Now that Messiah had come, and Mary was joyful over it. Come here as Mary, begging for mercy, joyful over that simple fact. The Messiah has come through Mary for you and for me. Amen.