11/8/26 Christ Fellowship

Magnificat - Luke 1

Okay, somebody tell me why you are here today. Are you here to pray? To fellowship? For the donuts and coffee? Because of the pastor's rugged good looks? Anybody? Are you here to worship? Why do we worship? Because it's a command. We want to. We want to give God glory. Maybe you need spiritual strength this morning. Maybe it's just a habit for you. Whatever the reason, I'm glad you are here. And whatever is going on in your life, worship is the thing to do.

When Job lost everything he had, do you remember what happened? In Job chapter one it says that one after another messengers came to Job and told him that he had lost all of his oxen, then his sheep, then his camels, all his servants and lastly all ten children. In **verse 20** it says that upon hearing this, *Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship* [21] *and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."*

The man had lost almost everything and the very first thing he did was worship. That's a good time to worship. I hear people say sometimes that they are too depressed or too emotional or too scared or too tired or too whatever to come to church and that just doesn't make any sense to me. That seems like the perfect time to come to church. That's when you need it the most. And God blesses your worship when you worship at times like that. But not all of us think about worship right after something really bad happens.

It also may not be the first thing we think of when something really good happens to us. But we know that's what **David** did when the Ark of the Covenant was brought back to Jerusalem. In **1 Chronicles 16**, after the Ark had been stolen then returned, David worshipped by sacrificing burnt offerings and fellowship offerings and he even danced and celebrated in his worship. Then he wrote a song that said, *"Sing to the Lord all the earth! Declare His glory among the nations!"*

When the Israelites left Egyptian slavery and crossed over the Red Sea on dry ground, the first thing **Moses** did was worship. He made up a song that said, *"I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.* [2] *"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."* Worship! It's singing, dancing, praise and sacrifice. It's prayer. It's meditation. It's introspection. It's celebration. That's biblical. That's what worship should be when something bad happens or something good happens.

We are continuing our November study of biblical characters who were thankful and if you will turn to the first chapter of the New Testament book of **Luke**, you will see what Mary did when she got the good news that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah. Grateful people, thankful people worship. It wasn't technically the first thing she did but it practically was. The very first thing she did after the angel gave her the good news was to go see her relative Elizabeth who was also pregnant.

Have you ever seen two pregnant women talking together? What are the odds that they are talking politics? How much time do they spend talking about football? Does bass fishing ever got brought up? No. They are talking babies and baby stuff. Stuff I don't know anything about. They are consumed with talking about babies. And Mary needed to talk to somebody and knew that she could trust Elizabeth and that Elizabeth would believe this incredible pregnancy story that Mary had. And sure enough, as soon as Elizabeth saw Mary, Elizabeth knew. Little pre-born John the Baptist knew and jumped in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth said, *"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear!"* Oh, that had to be comforting for Mary to hear.

So, right after that, Mary worshipped with a song she made up as well. In Latin it is called the Magnificat which comes from the first line of the song. Your version may read "Magnifies the Lord" or "Glorifies the Lord", but it is a song of happy worship. Because Mary was grateful, she worshiped. Now, I'll just warn you. This song doesn't rhyme worth a flip. And it's real hard to dance to. And evidently Mary was a one-hit-wonder because she never recorded any other songs. But this is a beautiful song of worship and praise that tells us some about Mary but even more about the characteristics of God. Let's read it in **Luke 1:46-55**.

And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors."

Michael Billester was a Bible distributor who visited a small village in Poland shortly before World War II. Billester gave a Bible to a villager, who was converted by reading it. The new believer then passed the Book on to others. The cycle of conversions and sharing continued until 200 people had become believers through that one Bible. When Billester returned in 1940, this group of Christians met together for a worship service in which he was to preach. He normally asked for testimonies, but this time he suggested that several in the audience recite verses of Scripture. One man stood and said, *"Perhaps we have misunderstood. Did you mean verses or chapters?"* These villagers had not memorized a few select verses of the Bible but whole chapters and books. Thirteen people knew Matthew, Luke, and half of Genesis. Another person had committed to memory the whole book of Psalms. That single copy of the Bible given by Billester had done its work. - E. Schuyler English

Mary was a young teenage girl who, like all the people of her day, had no personal copy of the Scriptures. And yet we see here in this passage that she has been steeped in the Word of God. She must have heard it so regularly in the synagogue that when she started her worship, Scripture just poured out. She had heard the story of **Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter 1** and how God had answered Hannah's prayers and given her a son and Hannah prayed and sang to God, *"My heart rejoices in the Lord; there is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you."* Don't you know those words resonated with Mary like never before?

She had obviously heard read **Psalm 34** that says, *"I will glory in the Lord; 3 Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together."* In **verse 48**, Mary says, "*From now on all generations will call me blessed"* which sounds like the

words of **Leah** in **Genesis 30:13** where she says, *"How happy I am! The women will call me happy."* In **Psalm 126:3** the psalmist says, *"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."* Sound familiar? It's what Mary quotes in **verse 49**.

I could keep going. All the way through, Mary is referring back to the Old Testament even as she talks about Israel's history and what God had done for them in the past. She had a deep understanding of scripture and that formed the basis for her worship. In **John chapter 4**, Jesus said they we should worship in spirit and in truth. How else do we worship in truth except through God's Word, the Bible? And Mary worshipped God by quoting back His Word to Him.

Another aspect of Mary's worship was how real and internal and a part of her it was. She couldn't keep from praising God. She says in **verses 46-47** that her soul and spirit glorifies and magnifies God. She's not making a distinction between the two. She is reiterating that her praise is coming from the very depths of who she is. It's not fake. It's not drummed up. It involves her mind, her emotions and her will.

I remember going to a revival meeting another church was having during the week a few years ago and the music director led us in three songs that lasted a total of 45 minutes. It was just this repetition of verses and phrases over and over again. They dimmed the lights and cranked up the smoke machine and the whole crowd just sang themselves into a hands-up, eyes-closed frenzy singing beautiful words over and over but it just felt forced. I felt like even God was thinking, *"Okay, sing something else."*

That's not what Mary was doing. This worship came from deep down. She meant it. She wanted to sing it. She had to sing it. She couldn't keep from singing it. Her worship was real.

Mary's worship was also humble. Do you see all those verses in there where Mary talks about how sweet she is and how deserving she is and how it's about time God rewarded her for being so precious? No, you don't. There is no place in worship for pride. There is no room for ego or *"hey, look at me."* The two great hindrances to worship, whether corporate or private, are ignorance of the scriptures and pride, which is hypocritical.

A big part of worship is gratitude and people that are proud find it hard to be grateful. Now, here's a great test for you to see if you are proud or not. Seeing pride in yourself is the hardest thing in the world to see. It's easy to see it in others but almost impossible to see in yourself. But the test is to seriously ask yourself if you are grateful. Can you name five things you are grateful to God for? Ten things? Twenty? Gratitude ought to flow out of your mind and into your mouth like a waterfall.

Look at all the things Mary is grateful for. She is singing this song because she is grateful for the baby but look at what else she says. In **verse 48** she is grateful that God is mindful of her. In **verse 50**, His mercy. **In 51**, His mighty deeds. In **52 and 53**, His sovereignty. And in **54-55**, God has been merciful to Israel. All through her humble worship she tells God how grateful she is.

Prideful people dwell on the bad things in their life and think they deserve better. They focus on how they have been mistreated but how they have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. The humble know they don't deserve anything but death and hell. They mourn over their sin and are grateful to God for His forgiveness and mercy.

It was **John Riskin** who said, *"I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility, doubt of his own power, or hesitation in speaking his opinion. But really great men have a … feeling that the greatness is not in them but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them."* **John Flavel** has said, *"They that know God will be humble, and they that know themselves cannot be proud."* Mary knew God and she knew herself. Therefore, her worship was marked by her humility and God blessed that worship.

Mary's worship was real and it was humble and it was fearful. Look at **verse 50**. *His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.* This is an almost direct quote from **Psalm 103:17** that says, *"But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him."* I met a lady a while back that said she can't stand it when people say they fear God. She said you shouldn't fear God. He's all loving. Don't be scared. But she misunderstands what it means to fear God. It is not being scared of Him. It's not dreading Him or wanting to hide from Him. It is a deep reverence; an awe of God that comes from knowing Him and knowing what He is capable of but not being scared of Him.

Years ago, I went with our friend Jody Kennedy and some others to Nicaragua for a mission trip. The trip lasted two weeks but at the end we got to spend almost a day sightseeing. And one of the places we went was a volcano. Nicaragua has nearly twenty active volcanoes and I don't remember this one's name and couldn't pronounce it if I did but it was made for tourists. It had a guardrail all the way around it. You could look over the guardrail and see red hot burning magma. The smell of burning sulfur was hard to take for very long but I remember thinking that was a good description of the kind of fear we should have of God. Stay within the guardrails and you would be okay. But if you got just a little way over the line you could literally be melted in an instant.

So, you don't have to be scared of that volcano but you should have a healthy fear of it. And Mary feared God and it came out in her worship. She said, *"His mercy extends to those who fear him."*

You know, I think a lot of people treat Mary in one of two extremes. They either consider her to be almost co-God and the queen of Heaven that we should pray to to make intercession for us which is absolutely not biblical. Or they dismiss her as just another nice lady in the Bible. Why do you think God chose Mary? There are some very specific reasons like she and Joseph were both in the lineage of David. But God knew Mary and Mary knew God and God knew she loved Him and worshipped Him. And her worship was real. It was humble. And it was fearful.

That's just what God wants from you today. And He wants your worship here at Christ Fellowship and He wants it at your house and in your car and when you sit with friends to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Music

Do you remember why we give gifts at Christmas? It's to remember the gift that God gave us in His Son Jesus. That gift includes peace and joy in this life and salvation from sin and entrance to Heaven in the next life. And God wants you to have it. And it's a free gift but it can be costly to you. It was definitely costly to God to send His Son to die on the cross to pay the price you should have to pay for your sins.

But by God's grace and through the faith that He gives, you can be saved. Ask Him today to forgive you of all your sins. Then allow Him to come into your life and start making you more like Him every day. Do it right now as the music plays.