

Overwhelming and Ordinary - God, Mary & Us (IV)

Bible Reading:
[Luke 1: 46-56](#)



PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
NEPEAN, ONTARIO

Scripture: Luke 1:46-56

Presented via Monologue - *Thirteen and Very Joyful*

[Performed with enthusiasm and excitement! Mary rushes to the stage with a great smile and turns to the audience with arms raised in praise.]

I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what happened--
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! *[Turns in a circle with laughter and joy]*
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.

[Her enthusiasm carries her as she demonstrates the active verbs of the text]

His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
He remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.

[Pause]

It's exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now!

Mary....
Mary, Mary, Mary --- I listen to you, but can't help wondering.
Mary - How can you say that you are the most fortunate woman on earth?
How can you be dancing in delight for God's honour?

Your fiancé is thinking **divorce**.
Your family is thinking **disown**.
Your community is thinking **stone**.

Seems to me that your situation couldn't get any more difficult.

And your status couldn't be any lower -

You're just an ordinary teenage girl:

no resumé,
no royal lineage,
no special skills.

Mary, you're a teenage girl who, like so many pregnant teens, has been sent away to live with a relative in another city.

How can you say, "*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God*"?

You're behaving like a child who has received the best Christmas present in the whole world.

Mary, what gives?

If you were watching this situation from the outside, you'd have every right to be asking questions like this.

You'd have every right to wonder.

But there it is – a delighted young girl, singing the praises of God.

She sings the praises of God for she **has** received the best present ever, one far more precious than all the glittery packaging and slick marketing which passes off as "*gifts from the heart*" in this time of year.

It is a gift that touches her right at the very core of her being;
that stayed with her throughout her life;
that deeply affected her; changed her;
that continues to profoundly affect people -- even today.

It is the gift for those fed up with today's all too shallow and fleeting images which are passed off as "*the message of the season*" or "*festive cheer*."

"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... [He] has done great things for me!"

Great things indeed!

What a gift -- wrapped within her womb.

In time she is able to wrap it in cloth and gently place it in a manger.

God has come down to touch her, to be within her, part of her.

The words of the prophet Isaiah, originally spoken hundreds of years earlier, are coming true in her young life:

The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Is 7:14)

Immanuel - a name meaning "*God with us*".

This is the amazing mystery growing within Mary -

Amazing - yet true!!

Those of you that have been blessed with the gift of motherhood know the incredible feeling of a new life moving within you;

to feel it kick and squirm -- part of you, and yet separate.

It's got to be one of the biggest miracles going.

Now think how that was in Mary's case:

this new life within, part of her and yet separate is **GOD!!**

Mary's song of rejoicing and our Christmas celebrations that follow in her footsteps, centre around the birth of that Baby;

around God becoming a human being -- one of us, **with** us.

Come to live among us, and to sacrifice His life for us.

To do for us what we were unable to do for ourselves.
To enter the fray of human existence and bridge the unbridgable gap between heaven and earth.
To gather lost sons and daughters back to their Waiting Father.

Mary surely doesn't understand it all, but something rings true inside as she sings of "God my Saviour."

Does it ring true to you, also?
Do you know what we mean when we say "Jesus saves."
We mean three things - something past, something present, something future.
We mean that:

Through him, believers **have been** saved from the guilt of sin.
Through him, believers **are being** saved from the control of sin, and from loneliness in daily life.
Through him, believers **will be** saved to an eternal existence in the glorious splendour of God's presence.

God my Saviour!
The lasting past, present and future gift of Christmas.
Does it ring true to you?
Today's we're considering Mary's song.
If anything in this carolling season is worth a song - this is it!

As Mary sang - "The Mighty One has done **great things** for me – holy is His name!"

Great things for Mary.
Great things for me.
Great things for you.

Great things.....
.....done by a very Great God.

Hear again what Mary sings in v.49:
"...the Mighty One has done great things for me -- Holy is His name."

That's the Gift-Giver:
MIGHTY
&
HOLY

We need to remember that. In this season where we send cards to people we otherwise don't talk to all year; wish seasonal best wishes to those who's neck we could wring at other times; and politely lie through our teeth "Thank you" for something we **KNOW** we'll never use;
-- in this season where so much has become surfacy --
please don't **EVER** forget that God is anything **BUT** that!

He is not someone to whom we can nod politely or send a Christmas greeting once a year.

He is no mere mental concept which we can either choose to recognize or reshape into whatever image we desire.

This is the living Creator of All.
Maker of Life.

Ultimate King and Judge -- **Mighty One**.

This is the One who is -

Perfect in thought and deed and character.

Far above and beyond all others -- **Holy One**.

The God who gives gifts into the lives of His people is an enormous, powerful being. That's one side of who He is.

The other side we glean from other descriptive words in this song.

We read that He is:

"MINDFUL...." (v.48)

"MERCIFUL" (v.50&54)

"REMEMBERING" (v.54)

This is the side of His nature painted in such vivid colour on the canvas of the nativity scene.

Reaching down out of heaven's heights to small, limited folk.

Reaching down out of heaven's heights to a young teen in Nazareth.

Reaching down out of heaven's heights to very ordinary people trudging to work or school through Ottawa slush.

This is the side of His nature that causes Mary to laugh and sing out at the top of her lungs, maybe with a little two-step to boot!

Gracious..... and faithful in that graciousness: showing it all through the year, not just in a moment of seasonal benevolence.

And it is to this Mighty, Holy, Mindful, Merciful and Remembering Gift-Giver that we are called to respond -- respond along with Mary.

to

to respond in one of two ways.

Did you catch how Mary's song seems to divide people into one of two categories?

Over on one side are those who figure they've got it all together, who figure they're one up on others, who figure they don't need a helping hand from anyone, who really haven't got much time for those who pull their lives together, who always seem to know best, who manage to push their way of thinking and doing things to the front of the line.

That's the one group. Mary's song slaps labels like "braggarts, tyrants, callous rich."

Folks with that kind of attitude don't end up as recipients of God's merciful gift. Instead they end up at the short end of God's stick. As Mary's song puts it - They will be scattered, brought down, sent away empty. Perhaps not politically correct wording, not very merry kind of talk.

But it's true.

True, and worth our pausing to consider.

That sort of attitude - which elbows its way to the front of the line, feels smugly self-sufficient, thinks it has everything together and needs nothing from nobody - might there be a possibility that we display this attitude towards heaven?

Could that be so..... even in this Christmas season?

And if so - how would that show up in our lives?

Well, it may slip into our lives when we get so busy that as families we find ourselves taking zero time to read the bible together, or pray together.

It sneaks up on us when we enter the dating world, and begin to look for a life partner without allowing compatibility in the world of faith to be a priority.

It begins to take over when we preen around a church building for all to see on Sunday, and yet head home to speak about others in a less than encouraging manner -

- hey, let's be blunt and call it what it is.... **gossip**;

or if we head home and insist that in our family circle things have to be done **MY** way;

or when year-end comes, annual spending is reviewed, and the line item called "charitables" shows a big goose egg, or falls far short of being any kind of real sacrifice towards the Lord Himself or towards those in this world who are in real need.

Perhaps at first none of these seem real big. Or we say, "*Just this time.*"

But, my friends, how quickly patterns set in.

And from those patterns, lifestyles.

And from those lifestyles, mindsets.

And from those mindsets, commitments.

And from those commitments, eternity.

Listen to the words of Zechariah 7.13:

"When I called they did not listen;

*so when **they** call I will not listen, says the LORD Almighty."*

But it doesn't have to be this way.

There is another option; another way we can respond.

It's the way Mary responded to the angel when he announced that God had chosen her to be the mother of Christ. Do you remember what she said? We considered it a couple of weeks ago. Remember? If your bibles are open, sneak a peak back to Luke 1:38:

"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

Mary's response is that of the second group of people described in her song.

They are the people with an attitude of humility; of hunger; of need.

They are people who realize their powerlessness.

They realize that they need whatever help they can get from God --

both in this life and for eternity;

they are **hungry** for that help,

for His hand,

for His presence in their lives.

Forget this great Canadian myth of rugged independence.

Forget self-sufficiency.

Forget obsession with rights and freedoms.

And think of a child who stands before her parent, arms extended, wanting to be picked up and carried, wanting to rest on a parental lap, trusting the parent for protection, for food, for love.

Hear the song of Mary again - v.50:

"His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation." --

That's reality, folks. As v.53 puts it -

"He has filled the hungry with good things."

One of the joys of being a pastor is that I get to visit with some absolute saints -- people that have been solid believers for decades. And I hear how these sentences from the song of Mary have come to life for them.

I've seen people experience some very basic things -

like having a load of guilt for past wrongs completely taken away and replaced with the forgiveness of the

Christ of Christmas and the acceptance of their Great Heavenly Father;

or the anxiety of uncertainty about some future happening replaced by overwhelming peace;

or loneliness pierced by a palpable sense of the presence of the Living Christ.

I've seen people experience some very special things like:

- physical or emotional healings;
- circumstances miraculously changed;
- being given a vision or insight or experience into the glorious reality of God and His power and majesty.

Experiences that heap up over the decades of walking the journey of the faith of Christmas;
that lead such believers to resonate with the poet who said:

*"Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us
shout aloud to the **Rock** of our salvation." (Psalm 95:1)*

It is the overwhelming richness of having God touch, change, surround and hold up a life that yields everything to Him;

a life that stands alongside Mary in total surrender;
a life that accepts as a gift into their heart the Son of Mary
-- Jesus the Christ.

That's a blessedness that goes far beyond January 1; beyond the shelf life of any Christmas fruitcake; beyond the endurance of any Fisher Price play set.

It's Christmas come alive.

True Christmas joy,
life joy,
eternal peace.

Mary experienced it. It made her sing.

This joy is available without cost, free for the asking, to all who will surrender their lives to Mary's son, the Christ of Christmas.

Have you made a commitment to Christ?

What do your patterns, lifestyle and mindset display?

Where do you stand with God?

My desire for each of you is not, first of all, for a tree filled with decorations and crowded with presents, or a table filled with a huge meal, or a home filled with guests.

My desire is that your heart be filled with joy;

the joy of having Jesus there.

It's only two days till Christmas.

May it be a day not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus from the womb of Mary, but a day to celebrate the birth of faith in your heart and life.

Perhaps this Christmas for the first meaningful time.

Perhaps in humble gratitude, for decades of God's presence.

A presence that brings greater joy than any present can give.

May it be your joy this season.