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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, even as he said to our fathers.”

Dear fellow redeemed and fellow anticipaters of our Lord’s return:

When a young married lady learns that she is expecting, she is almost bursting with joy to share the good news. Of course, she will wait to share this news with her husband, then likely her mother and her lady friends. She can barely contain her enthusiasm.

Contrast that with a young woman who isn’t married and learns that she has an unexpected package arriving. There is fear and dread. There is uncertainty—what will happen now? What will I do?

The angel Gabriel in our reading earlier had made an announcement to Mary—she would be with child and carry the son of God! But, she asked, how can this be? She was a virgin! But Gabriel said that her child was from God—and with God all things are possible.

Mary now has this joyous news. But who to share it with? Just consider Mary’s plight for a minute—she’s single and she’s expecting. To the average person there is one conclusion—she must have violated the sixth commandment: “Thou shall not commit adultery.” How many people are going to accept the explanation that this is a child of God—in fact, God himself!

But Mary knows where she can go and share the good news—Gabriel had announced that her relative, Elizabeth, was also with child—and that child was the forerunner of the Messiah! So Mary goes to Judea to visit her relative and share the good news. And arriving there, what Gabriel told her was indeed true: her relative, though past child-bearing age, was expecting; this child had leapt for joy in the presence of his Lord in another womb; and Elizabeth, before she heard the good news, is already congratulating Mary.

Our study this evening focuses on Mary’s words in what we called the Magnificat. Here **Mary expresses her joy**. *She expresses her joy as a sinner seeking God’s grace and mercy. She expresses her joy confident that God has carried out his plan to save all mankind.*

The text this evening is full of joy. The words denote an action. They denote a totality of joy within Mary.

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” In these words Mary expresses that her joy resides throughout her body, in every breath she takes. The terms “psyche” and “pneuma” are used—every thought, every breath, every fiber of Mary’s being glorifies and rejoices. Why is every fiber of Mary rejoicing? *“In God my Savior.”*

Many in Christianity take one of two views of Mary. One view is that Mary was conceived without sin, thus sinless herself. The other view reduces her to the status of a loose woman by declaring that she was likely seduced by a Roman soldier. The fact is, both views undermine our salvation. Jesus had to be born of a fully human woman to live under the same Law we all live under and to be able to die to pay for our sins. He also had to be God so that he could live a perfect life and thus able to pay the price for the sins of the whole world.

Mary herself states her sinfulness when she says *“my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”* If Mary were, indeed, sinless, then why would she need a Savior? Mary needed a Savior because she realized her sinfulness and her lowly estate. She knew she wasn’t chosen to bear the Lord because of any inherent goodness on her part—she was chosen by God’s grace alone.

We have also been chosen by God’s grace, not because we are good members of the church or because we pretty much keep out of trouble or because our family has been in the church since practically from the beginning. On the other hand, no one is not excluded from God’s grace because they made wrong choices, or never stepped foot in a church, or seem to be losing battles with addictions or other sins. God’s grace is offered to sinners—those in lowly estates. If you feel that your standing before God is impeccable, you do not need God’s grace. But if you feel burdened by sins and temptations and feel that there is no way God can ever love you, forgive you, take you back, then God’s grace IS for you. And like the prodigal son, our heavenly Father always welcomes us back home.

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.

In this chiasmic construction, Mary tells us that this is not a one-time thing, but what God would do on Calvary would be a lasting act. That one sacrifice would *pay for sins, once, for all*. Mary starts with *“all generations will call me blessed.”* Why would they call her blessed? Because *the Mighty One—El Shaddai—has done great things*. What are those “great things?” The mercy God extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. We as sinners can see our sinfulness—not just those mistakes we make, but all the sin that is an open act of rebellion against God. But God still seeks us out, redeemed us on Calvary, restores us to grace.

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.

How often do we not feel oppressed by our sin? How often do we feel like there is “no way out” for us, that we are so stuck in our sin, or they are so great that we cannot possibly be worthy in God’s eyes? Or maybe we think we’ve got it made—I come to church, I do my volunteer duties, I give my tithe. The Greek literally speaks of the proud here as those who think too highly of themselves. And certainly if we think we can curry God’s favor on our own, or try, just try, to do better or work harder on our

temptations, we can overcome them. But we fail—God has scattered us proud idiots. He has brought us so-called rulers of our lives down.

But he picks us up when we are humble. When we throw up our hands in despair and say, “Lord, I cannot do it. I leave it all in your hands to work out,” he lifts us up, dusts us off, washes us again in His son’s blood. He feeds us with the bread of life which nourishes and fills for all eternity.

Mary also expresses joy confident in knowing that God has carried out his plan for our salvation. That plan is the plan promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, promised to Abraham when he set off for a promised land, promised to David, the mighty king. Mary sings:

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”

God’s plan of salvation was promised to mankind almost immediately after the fall into sin. Notice that God didn’t tell Adam and Eve, “Well, I think I can solve your dilemma; just give me a few days.”? Rather, God laid out his solution when he confronted Adam and Eve. Paul writes that this plan was crafted before God even uttered, “Let there be....” Just think about this: God knew before he created the world that you and I would commit the sins and rebel against him the way we have. But guess what? He went ahead and created the world anyway! He knew that many would not appreciate or accept what he had done. But guess what? He went ahead, came to earth, took on flesh and was born of Mary in order to live on this earth and then to die a ghastly death on the cross—all this to pay for our sins!

No doubt Mary knew the prophecies of the Old Testament. In fact her song is made up of various portions of the Old Testament. She may have even remembered Isaiah’s words to King Ahaz: *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel*. In her song, Mary, a sinner, expresses her joy not only that she was chosen to carry the Lord in her womb, but because God was fulfilling His promise of a Messiah, to save believers from their sins. We, too, as sinners can rejoice. Though our sins are like scarlet, God has washed them clean in His son’s blood. Like Mary, we can rejoice because God has seen our lowly estate and rescued us and elevated us. Let us join Mary in singing this wonderful song of salvation—God taking on flesh and dwelling among us, to die for us, to rise again to demonstrate that sin, death, and the Devil no longer have power. Amen.

Mary's Song

46 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, even
as he said to our fathers."

Old Testament References

Though the LORD is on high, he looks
upon the lowly, but the proud he knows
from afar. (Psalm 138:6)

“Then all the nations will call you blessed,
for yours will be a delightful land,” says
the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 3:12)

He provided redemption for his people; he
ordained his covenant forever—holy and
awesome is his name. (Psalm 111:9)

But from everlasting to everlasting the
Lord's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's
children. (Psalm 103:17)

Shouts of joy and victory resound in the
tents of the righteous: “The Lord's right
hand has done mighty things!
The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the
Lord's right hand has done mighty
things!” (Psalm 118:15)

The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he
thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts
the needy from the ash heap; he seats them
with princes and has them inherit a throne
of honor. “For the foundations of the earth
are the Lord's; upon them he has set the
world. those who oppose the LORD will be
shattered. He will thunder against them
from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends
of the earth. “He will give strength to his
king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”
(1 Samuel 2:8, 10)