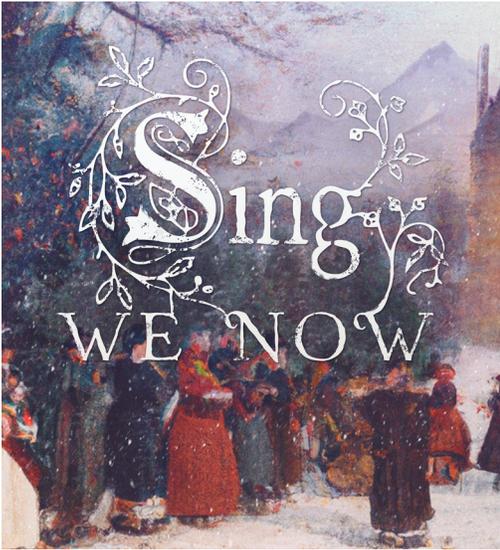




Sermon Growth Guide

December 3, 2023

Mary's Song



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Sing We Now – Mary’s Song

Luke 1:46-55

Key Verse: Luke 1:46-47

“And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Big Idea: God is faithful throughout history: He has intervened in the past, He will intervene again and He is intervening right now.

Foundations

Today, December 3, is the first Sunday in Advent. Today we begin our posture of *waiting* for the coming Savior. The word “advent” comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, meaning “arrival,” or “coming.”

We know the Savior is coming and so we wait with expectation and joy.

As we open the Gospel of Luke to examine Mary’s story today, we encounter her response, her outburst, upon being greeted and blessed by her relative, Elizabeth.

We don’t know if Mary sang these words or if the words simply burst forth from her mouth as Elizabeth received her (1:45), but we have come to know these beautiful words as Mary’s Song.

We do know that Mary’s response to the angel’s news of her pregnancy were words of faith and humility: “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled” (1:38).

As you prepare to receive Mary’s song today, take a moment to share a promise from the Lord that you carry with you. What is one promise the Lord has made in His Word that is significant for you. And why?

Pray as you open God’s Word today.

Understanding God’s Word

Read Luke 1:46-55 aloud. Perhaps have one person read and the rest of you close your eyes and receive this Word together.

What stands out to you in this song—a word, a phrase, or an idea?

How does the song begin and end? What does that tell us about who God is?

Applying God’s Word

When you hear Mary sing, “the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name,” what comes to mind in your life? What “great things” has God done for you?

Witnessing God’s Word

Mary is very aware of God working from generation to generation and pouring out mercy on His people forever. Reflect on the generations in your family—those older and those younger.

In light of Mary’s song, how might you pray today for the people on your family tree? Who needs the mercy, filling and humble love of God? Extend your prayers to other people God brings to mind today.

Pray together.

Is anyone else having a hard time figuring out what's true? Ever feel like you are living in a world of spin? We used to talk about the spin room or the spin zone, where you could expect people to put a nice veneer on the facts for their benefit. Now it seems like all you get is spin. Just spinning. And these are the things that matter most. Politics. Economics. War. Where can we get accurate information? I get my daily news from a podcast, The World and Everything in It. They say it's "biblically objective" reporting. I love it, but for most people today "biblically objective" is an oxymoron. We can't relate. What is up? Sometimes we need just one star, one North Star. In a world where everything spins until you feel dizzy and sick, one North Star can show the way, help you start to navigate, keep you sane.

Mary was a young woman living in a world like that, a world of spin and competing versions of truth. In terms of government, her country had been conquered by more dictators than an armchair historian could count. The Romans were only the latest. You would forgive her for being a little cynical about politics. Her people were divided into four different ideologies. Pharisees wanted to force God's hand through behavior. They believed if everyone worked hard to obey every rule in God's law, God would come and kick the Romans out. Sadducees accepted the realities of occupation, opting for the comfort of cooperation. They gave up on beliefs like a conquering Messiah, supernatural intervention from God or a bodily resurrection to eternal life. Zealots wanted to spin the wheels of revolution by blood and blade. "If only we rise up and fight, God will fight with us," they thought. Then there were the Essenes, a spiritual group who withdrew from society to pursue personal holiness. Think John the Baptist but with less locust eating. Withdrawal is its own sort of temptation. The more you withdraw from people you disagree with the smaller the room gets until,

eventually, it's just you. Everybody had their case to make, their spin on things, the powers that be. That's the world Mary knew.

Then one day in Nazareth an angel appeared. Into the sea of spin, stuck on this chessboard with all the pieces in place, down from above comes a vertical intersection dropping in. God. I almost forgot God! God is dropping down onto the chessboard from above, like Thor in a Marvel movie smashing down onto the landscape. That's going to make a difference. But this isn't fantasy. This isn't just ideas or spin. For Mary it is as real as the child growing inside her, when she has never known a man. Imagine the stress, the anxiety, the worry and self-pity. She went to find a friend in Elizabeth. Mary was given the gift of faith, and she exercised it. She believed. She chose joy. She chose praise. She chose song.

This year, we are looking at the songs of Christmas. The Bible is full of these songs that break out surrounding the birth of Jesus, and frankly, we need to respond in song too. **Sing We Now**, of Christmas. This is the time of year we change our songs, we change our music tracks, our soundtracks. There are a lot of bad songs people sing this time of year. How do they survive? But we do need to sing the songs of the birth of Jesus. There is no event in human history that inspired more songs than this. As followers of Jesus, let's sing these songs. Mary's song is sometimes called The Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord," she sings. Or as we have it: "And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.'" (Luke 1:46-47) Like many songs in Scripture, it doesn't necessarily say that she sang it, but the text is so lyrical and balanced it quickly became a song in the church if it wasn't one originally. But this was an inspired exultation, one of those moments of inspiration when the words flow, and the lyrics pour out and the heart overflows with a joyful song.



What does she sing? “My soul glorifies the Lord.” What you dwell on, you magnify, you make bigger. If you dwell on your problems, dwell on your challenges, dwell on your resentments, they are enlarged. Enlarge the Lord. What you get closer to gets bigger. Get closer to the Lord. “And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” (Luke 1:47) Mary has a Savior in Whom her spirit rejoices. If you have held on to a view of Mary as perfect and without sin, remember only a sinner needs a 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.” (Luke 1:48-49) Rather than dwell on her personal problems, rather than be overcome by the inconvenience of the child in her womb, Mary is able to see her story from the long perspective, from a God’s-eye view. Great is His name. Great is His story. My story doesn’t have to be perfect.

Mary’s song is modeled after Hannah’s song. In 1 Samuel 2, Hannah could not have a child and she prayed to God. She became miraculously pregnant, like Mary was miraculously pregnant, and Hannah dedicated her child, Samuel, to the service of the Lord. When Mary found herself in distress trying to understand her life, she turned to the Word of God, she turned and rested on scripture, you see, and she found her story in God’s story. She didn’t have a Bible like you and I have, but she heard and memorized the Word of God, so much so that this story came to her in her time of trial—along with a host of Scriptures. Some say there are a dozen different Scriptures cited by Mary as she sings. It just flows out of her.

But what is it about? It is a rebel song. It is a song of revolution. The theme of Mary’s song is this: in this world of spin where everybody thinks they have the upper hand, my God is able. My God is able to turn things upside down. My God

is able to stop evil and bring good. My God is able to see the unseen, bless the disregarded, save the lost, redeem the enslaved, topple kings and governments and systems and bring justice and righteousness and goodness and truth. My God is able. The chess pieces are not all set. God is able.

The spin says the church ends with this generation. Mary sings, “His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:50) Nobody is too far away for His mercy. The spin says might makes right and the power goes to those who shout the loudest, the only way to win is to be the most arrogant, most boastful, most aggressive. Mary sings, “He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.” (Luke 1:51) The spin says we are living in a closed system of limited power and influence; the only way to spin the wheels of revolution is to put the blade to the neck of the oppressor, to grease the wheels with blood, to kill man, woman and child, until the oppressor falls and the oppressed rise to the top and enjoy the spoils. Mary sings, “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” (Luke 1:52) The spin says it is all about money in the end; either you have it, or you want it. That’s it. So go get yours before someone else takes it. Mary sings, “He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.” (Luke 1:53)

Can you see? This is a revolution. This is a rebel song. The game is not predetermined, the system is not closed. God is able to change things. God is able to make a difference. God is in the game now. He sets up kings and He topples kings. He turns prosperity into poverty and poverty into prosperity. He takes down the proud and lifts up the humble. God is able to turn the world upside down. That’s Mary’s song. What’s yours? How closed is your system as you move into Christmas



this year? “He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and His descendants forever, just as He promised our ancestors.” (Luke 1:54-55) Up ‘til now, God has not forgotten to help. God has not forgotten to be merciful. Are you singing a closed song of a world locked in and shut up, a chessboard with all the pieces settled and the end of the game locked in tight? Sing a rebel song. Try it on.

Today we come to the table for a rebel’s meal. This is revolution bread. When we hold this bread we say to the world of spin, “No. We don’t play by the same rules. Our provision is not a product of the game. God takes care of us. God provides for us. We have bread you know not of. The bread of life is here.” When we hold this cup we say, “No. We don’t use blood the way you use blood. Blood is not the means to power. The most powerful One in the world, the Lord God Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, He took up residence in the virgin Mary and was born of flesh and blood. He spilled His blood. He poured it out. Now this cup is a new covenant, a new promise. All can be forgiven.” Jesus has the power. This meal is a rebel meal. It upsets the spin. It resets the North Star. It points us again to Jesus. Come and eat with the revolutionaries who believe God is able and sing the rebel song of Mary.

