

Mary's Hymn

Luke 1:46-56

1. Introduction.

- a. The season of Christmas can be a difficult time of year for many.
- b. For the Christian, the season of Christmas ought to be much more than superficial happiness.
 - i. It should be a time of deep affections and joy.
 - ii. The Christian's affections should be settled in something unchanging and eternal.
 - iii. This reality is wonderfully displayed in Mary's Hymn—she becomes a model of joyful worship, rooted in the unchanging faithfulness of a merciful God.
- c. Short review – Mary learns she is the Genesis 3 woman.
 - i. Sin broke everything.
 - ii. In the midst of the Fall, God promised to set all things right through the Messiah.
 1. He would be the restorer and redeemer.
 2. He would be the means through which God proved Himself faithful.
 - iii. Mary goes to Elizabeth to receive confirmation of Gabriel's message that she would be the bearer the Messiah (1:39-45).
 1. Mary receives confirmation, as she discovers Elizabeth is truly pregnant.
 2. Moreover, she is pregnant with the Forerunner—the one who would announce the Messiah. As she walks in, John leaps in Elizabeth's womb. This was a piling on of confirmation.

2. Mary's Hymn ("Mary's Magnificat").

- a. Mary responds to the confirmation with a hymn of praise (46-47).
 - i. Verses 46-47 are written in a parallel structure. Hebrew parallels function to emphasize the point being expressed.
 - 1. Soul – Spirit.
 - 2. Exalts – Rejoiced.
 - 3. Lord – God my Savior.
 - ii. The language of “soul” and “spirit” is a reference to the fullness of her inner-being.
 - 1. She’s arrested by the news and bursts forth in joy.
 - 2. As a side, this shows us how worship is something which always begins on the inside.
 - a. Worship will work itself outward into an external act.
 - b. However, the external act, not motivated by an inward affection, is dead religion.
 - i. This is not the case with Mary. It begins on the inside.
 - ii. She is a model of true worship.
 - 3. Mary explodes in praise toward God, but for a very specific reason—He is her Savior (47).
- b. The content of Mary’s Hymn (48-55).
 - i. The personal nature of God’s saving work toward Mary (48-49).
 - 1. All generations will count Mary blessed (48).
 - a. Rome misunderstands this verse.
 - i. Mary does not possess a special grace or blessedness to dispense.

- ii. Mary understands herself to be a sinner, as she qualifies God to be her Savior (c.f., 47).
 - iii. As such, the passage does not command us to praise (or bless) Mary.
 - b. The term for “blessed” means “happy,” or “joyful.”
 - i. The point is that regardless of her lowliness and humble state, her life will forever be defined by joy because of what God has done for her.
 - ii. She is an example of what true faith always produces in a person—an unceasing joy.
- 2. The reason for Mary’s joy (49).
 - a. The Lord has done great things for her.
 - b. Mary’s blessedness (or joy) has nothing to do with what she might inherently possess (RC view), but everything to do with what God has done for her.
 - c. This is an incredible statement of one who has understanding. She realizes God (the Mighty One) always works for those who are not mighty.
- ii. The cosmic nature of God’s saving character (50-55).
 - 1. Mary understands that while God is a deeply personal God, He’s also the God of all creation. Her joy isn’t defined by simply what God has done for her, but by what He’s done for the generations.
 - 2. Mary, picking up on Psalm 103, reflects on how God is utterly unchanging and merciful (50).
 - a. The same God Who’s shown her mercy, is the same God Who’s shown mercy throughout the ages.
 - b. Truly this is Israel’s faithful God.
 - c. God’s holiness (v.49) compels Him to show mercy.

- i. He does not tire of showing mercy.
 - ii. He takes that which is utterly sinful, and in His merciful patience, makes them holy.
 - 1. This is something which He's done for generations, and will continue to do for generations.
 - 2. It is simply Who He is!
 - iii. His mercy does not come to all, but to those who fear Him.
 - 1. To fear God means to rightly understand God—and then respond in an appropriate proportion.
 - a. You acknowledge His position and authority (Ps. 25:12).
 - b. You love God and keep His commandments (Deut. 7:9).
 - c. You serve Him from a sincere heart, controlled by truth (Josh. 24:14).
 - d. You stand before Him with a broken and contrite heart (Isa. 57:15).
3. Mary focuses on the presence of a contrite heart (51-53).
- a. God is opposed to the proud—He scatters them in the thoughts of their heart.
 - i. He sets them free in the imagination of their own wickedness to destroy themselves.
 - ii. He loosens His restraints of grace.
 - b. While God is opposed to the proud, He exalts the lowly (52-53).

- i. This is the divine reversal.
 - ii. We explicitly see this in His choice of Israel.
 - c. God is interested in displaying His character, which is why He chooses to work through that which is weak.
 - 4. God acts from an overflow of faithfulness to His own character (54-55).
 - a. He acts from a commitment to His own mercy.
 - b. God can't help but to be merciful—He acts from His innermost being.
- 3. Conclusion.
 - a. Mary reflects on the past faithfulness of God as the grounds for personal assurance that God will be faithful to all His future promises.
 - i. He was faithful to Israel.
 - ii. He was faithful to bring forth His promised Messiah.
 - iii. As a result, He will be faithful to set all things right in fulfillment of the great Genesis 3 promise.
 - b. Mary is our example.
 - i. No matter what the situation, there ought to be a constant thread of joy as we cast ourselves onto the faithfulness of a God Who can't contradict His own faithful character.
 - ii. In this season, typically marked by superficial happiness, the Christian has great reason to be joyful. Our hope is grounded in something that cannot change—God's faithfulness to His own promise to set all things right.