

Journey to Christmas with the Midwives of the Messiah Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

By Sharon W. Betters

TODAY'S TREASURE

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His offspring forever."

Luke 1:46-55 ESV

Mary the mother of Jesus joins our motley band as we Journey to Christmas. Imagine her joy-filled eyes as she runs to embrace Tamar the Forgotten One, Rahab the Harlot, Bathsheba the Abused and Ruth the Outsider. Christmas magnifies pain and loss, making it a sweet gift to invite Mary to walk with us this last week before Christmas because Mary knows grief.

On the first Christmas Day after the fatal car accident of our son, Mark, I slipped away from our family to spend time alone in our bedroom and cried out, "Lord, I'm desperate for help in navigating this Land of Grief. Help me, help me!" Through the pages of Scripture, He sent me Mary.

What conflicting emotions she must have experienced, starting with the moment the angel told her about the coming Messiah. I wondered, "Was she lonely, afraid, or confused? What deep feelings swirled around her soul when she gave birth to Jesus, far from family, disconnected from everything familiar?" But more, "What enabled her to survive standing at the foot of that Cross?"

Luke's description of that first Christmas is through Mary's eyes. I imagine Luke furiously writing down Mary's words as she shared not just the facts of those days but some of her emotional response to the supernatural visits of the angel, Joseph's response, her rush to visit with her cousin Elizabeth, and the long journey on a donkey to Bethlehem when she was nine months pregnant. We wish for more from Mary, but as you read Luke 1 and 2, imagine Mary's voice sharing her story in her words.

Luke 1:46-55 known as “Mary’s song of Praise: The Magnificat,” is a page from her private journal. This beautiful hymn opens wide the secrets to Mary’s ability to respond to the angel as she did. It is a roadmap for anyone facing the unknown potholes and storms of life. She starts with an acknowledgement of her own need of a savior and her absolute trust that God keeps His promises from generation to generation. That Christmas morning, after Mark’s death, I wondered if she sang this song through the grid of her emotions, as an intentional sacrifice of praise, choosing to believe the promises of God in the context of unbelievable circumstances. Following the thread of her story took me to the foot of the cross where I wept as I married my longing for Mark to her anguish as she watched the brutalization of her beloved son. Did she wonder where God was? As if to answer my questions, God drew me back to the Scriptures from Isaiah where He repeatedly promised to never leave me alone, to guide me in the darkness, to never forget me, to always be with me. As Mary raised this special child and then watched him die on a cross, did she draw comfort from these same Isaiah passages:

- *But now, thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:1-2 (ESV)*
- *Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:18-19 (ESV)*
- *...even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. Isaiah 46:4(ESV)*
- *Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame. Isaiah 49:23b (ESV)*

Read the Isaiah Scriptures again and where appropriate, write your name into each promise, believing that these promises are yours.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, thank you for the promise that You are doing a new thing, that You will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.