

Bible Passage

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me
blessed;
⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

Outline

1. Longing for the New Covenant**a. The Old Covenant and Humanity's Failures:**

- i. Discuss how the Old Covenant revealed human inability to fully comply with God's laws.
- ii. Illustrate with examples from the Old Testament.

b. Prophecy of the New Covenant:

- i. Reference Jeremiah's prophecy about a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- ii. Emphasize the shift from law to grace.

c. Humanity's Deep Longing:

- i. Explain the universal yearning for a more intimate relationship with God.
- ii. Connection of this longing to our innate need for grace and redemption.

2. The Bridge Between God and Man**a. A. Jesus Christ as the Fulfillment:**

- i. The incarnation of Jesus as God's ultimate promise.
- ii. Discuss the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

b. B. Mary's Role in the Divine Plan:

- i. Mary's obedience and willingness to be part of God's plan.
 - ii. The Annunciation as a pivotal moment in bridging heaven and earth.
- c. **C. Our Role in Continuing the Bridge:**
- i. How believers today continue to bridge the gap through faith and obedience.
 - ii. The importance of the church community in supporting each other's walk of faith.

3. The Fulfillment of the Promise

a. **The Magnificat: Mary's Response to God's Plan:**

- i. Analyze Mary's song (Luke 1:46-55) as a response to the fulfillment of God's promise.
- ii. The significance of Mary's understanding and acceptance of her role.

b. **Living in the Fulfilled Covenant:**

- i. How believers today live under the New Covenant.
- ii. Emphasis on grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit's role in our lives.

c. **Personal Application and Response:**

- i. Encourage listeners to reflect on their own response to God's calling.
- ii. Challenge to trust and obey, even when God's plan diverges from personal plans.

Notes

Throughout history, the covenants between God and humanity are more than mere agreements; they are profound expressions of God's will and love for His people. Initially, God, as the Creator, established a relationship with mankind, outlining their purpose in connection with Him. As time progressed, these covenants evolved, highlighting not only humanity's repeated failures but also God's unwavering grace and mercy. The new covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah, marks a significant shift in this divine-human relationship. It moves away from a focus on human actions to God's initiative in inscribing His word onto human hearts. This covenant signifies that the responsibility of fulfillment rests solely with God. This radical change emphasizes that it is no longer about human efforts but about God's grace doing all the work.

This shift leads us to the story of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God's promise. Jesus' birth and life weren't just for celebration or tradition. They were the culmination of God's plan to reconcile humanity to Himself, a plan completed through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This narrative of redemption began not just with Jesus' arrival but with an angelic message to Mary, setting in motion the fulfillment of the new covenant.

Mary's story is particularly significant in understanding our relationship with God. Before the angel Gabriel's announcement, Mary had her life planned out, much like we lay down tracks for our life's journey. Her encounter with the message was a call to abandon her plans for God's greater purpose. This moment in

Mary's life illustrates a vital lesson in faith: the willingness to forego our plans for God's superior design.

The journey with God often requires us to “die to ourselves.” This concept doesn't mean negating our existence but rather surrendering our plans and desires to God's will. Mary's response to God's call exemplifies this surrender. She chose God's plan over her own, understanding that her true desires and passions would find their fulfillment in alignment with God's will. Mary's acceptance of God's plan reflects a deep longing for the new covenant, a relationship with God where the focus is not on human effort but on divine grace. As we, like Mary, delight in the Lord, we find that our true desires are fulfilled in ways that transcend our understanding. This is the essence of the new covenant – a transition from self-centered plans to a God-centered life. Mary's story is a prime example of how God's calling can turn our lives upside down. Chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, Mary faced enormous social stigma and judgment. This was not a path she would have chosen for herself, but it was the path God had set for her. Her journey teaches us that following God's way might not always align with societal expectations or our personal desires.

Mary's response to her extraordinary circumstances is captured in the Magnificat, a song that echoes the prophecies of Isaiah. This hymn of praise reflects not only her deep understanding of Scripture but also her unwavering faith in God's plan. Despite the challenges she faced, Mary rejoiced in the Lord, demonstrating her acceptance of God's will over her own.

While Jesus is the ultimate bridge between God and humanity, Mary's role in this divine narrative is significant. She was the vessel chosen by God to bring Jesus into the world. This act of God choosing Mary, and Mary accepting this role, highlights the importance of being open to God's workings in our lives, even when they deviate drastically from our own plans. Mary's significance in the Christian narrative is not due to her actions being salvific but rather because she served as a faithful servant of God. The true work of salvation was accomplished through Christ. Mary's value lies in her obedience and her role as a chosen servant, emphasizing that our worth in God's eyes often comes from our willingness to serve His purpose, not from our own abilities or achievements.

The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth in Luke chapter one is a profound example of the kind of support and affirmation that believers should offer one another. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizes and affirms Mary's role and calling. This interaction is a model for how the church community should respond to those who are courageously following God's calling, even when it seems unconventional or challenging. The story of Mary and Elizabeth emphasizes the vital role of church and community in the life of a believer. As we walk the often challenging path of faith, it's crucial to have fellow believers who understand, support, and affirm our journey. The church should be a place where we encourage and cheer each other on, recognizing the work of God in each other's lives.

Mary knew the promises of God and understood the significance of the role she was chosen to play. This understanding

gave her confidence despite the seemingly crazy nature of her situation. Similarly, believers today are called to immerse themselves in Scripture and the church community, drawing strength and affirmation from God's promises and the support of fellow Christians. Engaging with Scripture is not a mere religious obligation; it's a way to connect with the living and active word of God. The Bible speaks to us, guiding and affirming our journey in faith, reminding us of our role in God's overarching plan. Regular engagement with the Bible and church teachings helps keep us aligned with God's will, even when the world may not understand our choices.

The stories of missionaries like Hudson Taylor, who ventured into unknown lands to share God's word, are a testament to the courage and dedication required to follow God's plan. These missionaries, much like Mary, the mother of Jesus, exemplified a deep commitment to God's calling, regardless of personal sacrifice or societal understanding. Mary's decision to accept God's will for her life, despite the challenges and social stigma it brought, is a powerful example of true obedience. Her story teaches us that following God's plan might require us to step out of our comfort zones and defy conventional logic. Mary's willingness to be used by God, despite the potential repercussions, is a lesson in faith and surrender. The story of Elizabeth's affirmation of Mary's calling underscores the importance of having a supportive community that recognizes and encourages God's work in our lives. We need more 'Elizabeths' in our world – people who, instead of relying on their own logic, see and support the divine calling in others, even when it doesn't make sense.

The key to following God's plan is to truly listen and be receptive to His voice, even if it leads us down an unexpected path. Whether it's a call to serve in a distant land or to reach out to a lonely individual, obedience to God's guidance is paramount. However, often our fears and concerns about societal judgment or personal inconvenience can hinder our responsiveness to God's calling.

The act of sharing God's love, whether through missions or simple acts of kindness, should not be seen as burdensome work but as a form of worship. It's a privilege to be part of God's plan and to share His word with others. This perspective transforms ministry from an obligation into an opportunity to express our gratitude and love for God. Our approach to ministry, parenting, or any form of service should not be dictated by societal norms or our own "train tracks" of logic. Instead, it should be guided by prayerful submission to God's will. Embracing God's plan might mean rethinking our aspirations for our children, our careers, and our lives in general, in favor of His divine purpose.