

Mary's Joy

Luke 1:46-56

- I. The relation between Hope, Peace, Joy and Love (Advent).
 - A. All four are closely related to each other (major themes in Scripture).
 1. Hope—through the work of Jesus Christ.
 2. Peace—From our great hope in Jesus Christ.
 3. Joy—A result and response from the hope and peace available in Jesus Christ.
 4. Love—*We love because He first loved us* (1 John 4:16).
- II. What is Joy?
 - A. In Scripture, joy and happiness are closely related, often used interchangeably.
 1. Jeremiah 31:13; Proverbs 23:25;
 2. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests we divorce joy from happiness.
 3. Definition: Joy is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in Christ, and being filled with the Holy Spirit and flowing out in your life.
- III. What about Mary?
 - A. Context: Luke 2:26-37 The angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary regarding her miraculous pregnancy with "the Son of the Most High".
 - B. What about Mary?
 1. Two mistakes: To make too much about Mary and to make too little about Mary.
 - a. Too much—co-redemptress; co-mediatrix; Immaculate conception...
 - b. Too little—Mary who?
 2. The very first Christian? She composed and sang the very first Christmas song.
- IV. Mary, an example of a truly joyful person.
 - A. Mary's joy begins with submission to God's will.

1. Luke 1:38
- B. Mary's joy flows out of true worship.
 1. Mary breaks out in song—an outflowing of the heart.
 2. A hymn—A song of praise.
 3. The “attitude” of worship:
 - a. Both internal and intense.
 - b. Worship “magnifies” the Lord—an ever-increasing magnification of God.
 - c. Worship is not from external stimulation; it expresses what’s inside the soul.
 4. Soul and spirit (Vs.46-47)
 - a. Soul—who you are.
 - b. Spirit—what moves you.

“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”

G. MacDonald

- C. Mary's joy comes through humility (V.48).
 1. Biblical humility: An understanding of just how low one's importance really is, even when God “blesses” you.
 2. Mary's lowliness—A young 13 year old girl? From a backwater, insignificant town Nazareth. She's a woman...SHE IS A SINNER NEEDING A SAVIOR!
- D. Mary's reasons for expressing what was overflowing from her heart— she sees and grasps:
 1. What God is doing for her—verses 48-49
 2. What God will do for all future generation—verse 50
 3. What God did for others in the past—verses 51-56

Mary comprehended what God has been doing in all of redemptive history—and she has great joy!

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I. The relation between Hope, Peace, Joy and Love (Advent)

We are in our third week of Advent... the traditional celebration of the first “coming” or “advent” of Jesus Christ when He came to earth nearly 2000 years ago as the Savior and the anticipation of His second return to earth to set up His eventual eternal kingdom.

Each of the four weeks centers on a specific traditional theme... the first week was **Hope**... the second week was **Peace**... this week, today, is **Joy**...and we anticipate next week **Love**...these are not just four independent, unrelated topics... they were not put together “in a vacuum”...They are core themes in the Bible.

They are all connected and are closely related to each other... We start with the great **Hope** we have because of Jesus Christ... without Him we would be trapped in eternal darkness... we have hope because of the salvation only He has brought to our reality... His work on the cross... paying the full price of our sins... making us clean so that we may enter into the holy presence and fellowship of Almighty God....

We have hope in our future eternity to dwell with Him in His kingdom brought to completion in His future return...

The reason we can have peace... is because of that hope... because of that hope in Christ we can have eternal peace regardless of our circumstances... we can have that otherworldly Peace the apostle Paul says **surpasses all understanding**... a peace so great we cannot comprehend it....

Having this great hope, resulting in peace... we can also have a great supernatural joy... All three of those are centered and are possible because to the great love that God has for us... which has been revealed through His giving to us His Son Jesus Christ...

We love because He first loved us.

II. What is Joy?

This morning, we center our attention on this great **Joy**...

I'm a little envious of those preachers who have been preaching for many years... who have preached on a vast number of topics and passages in Scripture... who when the subject comes up again...15....20 years later... they can pull out their old sermons and preach them again...

I can't do that... this week I pulled out my sermon I did on this morning's passage and topic of joy from 2004...and immediately I realized how much I've changed... I was true to the passage... I didn't deliver any heresies... but *I've* changed...

I said back then these observations about "Joy"...comparing Joy to Happiness...

- 1) Happiness is a feeling, but joy is not.
- 2) Happiness is fleeting, but joy is everlasting.
- 3) Happiness depends on circumstances or other people, but joy is a gift from God.
- 4) Happiness is worldly, but joy is divine.

But there are no such distinctions made in Scripture... in the Bible joy and happiness are closely related...often used interchangeably... If a person is joyful... that person is happy... Depending on the translation, the Bible uses the words happy and happiness about 30 times, while joy and rejoice appear over 300 times...

Jeremiah 31:13 says, **"I will turn their mourning into gladness (happiness); / I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow."** Here, in the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the words gladness and joy are used synonymously.... Proverbs 23:25 says, **"Let your father and your mother be glad, / And let her rejoice who gave birth to you."** Being glad is the same thing as rejoicing in this verse.

So in the Bible...joy and happiness are linked together...without substantiation from the Bible... Joy is often presented as **"true" contentment based on faith**. Happiness, in contrast, is often thought of as **"false" or "superficial" joy... emotion dependent on circumstances**. But that is not a distinction we can see in the Bible.... There is nothing in the Bible that suggests we divorce joy from happiness.

Of course, there are different types of joy and happiness.... There is a joy that comes from the world, such as **"the fleeting pleasures of sin"** spoken of in Hebrews 11:25.... There is a joy that is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). There is a temporary happiness and an eternal happiness, but we can call both "happiness."

Definition: Joy is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in Christ, and being filled with the Holy Spirit and flowing out through your life.

When it comes to Biblical truth...we don't need to split hairs between the meaning of joy and happiness. **We just need to decide where our joy comes from**. Are we happy in the Lord, or are we content with the fleeting happiness the world affords?

III. What about Mary?

What the Bible does give us are real life examples on how to have true, real, biblical, lasting joy ...regardless of circumstances... the apostle Paul in Philippians 4 says **Rejoice in the Lord**

always; again I will say, rejoice!...rejoice is the verb form of the noun joy...where and when did Paul write those words?... **when he was in prison.**

In the Old Testament...David...was dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, expressing unbridled joy...**And David was dancing before the Lord with all *his* strength.** You don't dance like that unless you are very happy!

Getting to the Christmas story...Luke 2:8....**In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.⁹ And an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy which will be for all the people.**¹¹ For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

For me... the person that comes to mind is Mary the mother of Jesus... I think Mary shows us the anatomy of lasting true joy in her reaction to the news she supernaturally receives from angel Gabriel... a most familiar passage...Luke 2:26-37 is **the background for our passage this morning.**

Read Luke 2:26-37

How would you respond to such news?... *The Holy Spirit is going to enter your body...* that's intense... and then...*You're going to have a baby... and that baby is THE holy child.... The Son of God.... Have a good day.*

There's no real response yet from Mary other than being perplexed and compliant... maybe a little shell shocked... her response... her expressed great joy is in the verses that follow.... Before we look at these great words... ***what about Mary?***

Mary is one of those subjects in the Bible that that we can make one of two mistakes... we've run across a couple of those the last couple of months going through the book of Revelation... *We tend to make one of two mistakes when it comes to the devil... we either think too much of him or too little...*

The same regarding Israel...the Jews... remember?... we tend to either think too much of Israel or too little.... Mary falls into this same tension... we tend to either think too much of Mary... or too little of her.

Our Roman Catholic friends elevate her too high and we protestants are afraid to elevate her at all... I've heard Mary described as the "*Co-redemptress of the human race*" meaning Mary helped redeem the world from sin... "*Co-Mediatrix of the human race*" meaning the co-mediator, alongside Jesus between mankind and God.

I read this week that there is a basilica in Rome called the Santa Maria Maggiore...that has a picture of Mary hanging on the cross with Jesus... as if she helped redeem the world... there is a painting in the church that depicts Jesus crowning Mary as the queen of heaven.

This same religious tradition:

Mary was *always* a virgin...which is hard to explain Joseph, James, Jude and Simon... her sons after Jesus... The idea of *Immaculate Conception* where the Virgin Mary was free of original sin from the moment of her conception.

You should pray to Mary... and Mary dispenses grace... all of those are not supported anywhere in the Bible... **the other extreme**... is to disregard Mary altogether... to ignore the fact that Mary was uniquely favored by God... she was “**blessed among women**”... she was a special woman....

You may never have realized that Mary was arguably the very first Christian... she’s not the first person to be saved... not the first to believe in God of course... but she was the very first Christian in that she was the very first to have her life changed by that very first Christmas message...

She embraced the gospel before the gospel was fully played out at the cross and resurrection... At the announcement of his birth and through his birth... Mary had a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ... Mary is the first person to worship God for what He will do through His Son Jesus Christ...

Mary’s response to the news from the angel is to break out with a song.....and in this song... Mary shows us what goes into having pure lasting joy... **this is the very first Christmas song... the first Christian hymn!**

Let’s read this hymn... through the ages it has been called “The Magnificat”... which is the Latin for “Magnify” from the first verse of the song.

Read Luke 1:46-56

IV. Mary, an example of a truly joyful person.

What can we learn about this everlasting joy from Mary’s song... we can see that several things go into this joy.

1. Mary’s joy begins with submission to God’s will.

Back up to verse 38...right after Mary gets the news from the angel Gabriel... after she gets over her first reaction of being shocked, surprised and perplexed... she realizes this truly is an announcement from God... she says:

“Behold, the slave of the Lord (notice her acknowledgement of her position... she is a slave [*doulos*...one who is totally devoted to the service of another...foregoing any ownership rights of their own]...a bond slave of the Lord.)

May it be done to me according to Your word.” And the angel departed from her...She didn't resist or question God's plan, but instead declared herself the Lord's servant, willing to follow whatever He asked of her. This attitude of submission is foundational to experiencing deep and lasting joy, as it aligns our hearts with God's purposes...His will.

It reveals the great trust Mary had for God... for all of her life...that He is trustworthy... He is all powerful...He is mighty... He is loving...He's unchanging... All all-knowing and wise... You can rest in Him!... you can believe in His promises...

1 John 2:17: **"The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."**

2. Mary's joy flows out of true worship.

Worship and joy are attached at the hip....I don't think you can worship God without great joy.

As I said... this is a hymn...a hymn by definition is *a song of expression for the purpose of adoration*... exalting God...not man...Mary doesn't break out in song to elevate herself because SHE IS BLESSED... the word is derived from the Greek *hymnos* which simply means *song of praise...worship*

That is exactly what Mary does...she can't help it!... from the realization of what the angel's news meant...GOD IS GOING TO BE YOUR BABY... she wells up inside...She is overcome with adoration of God... She doesn't think... *wow I must be really great for God to select ME to mother His earthly Son... I'm special*...No!... there is no focus on herself!...she is focused all on God.

That is the **attitude** we all should take towards worship...*an attitude is a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something usually reflected in one's behavior*... Your attitude regarding worship is how you have come to **understand what it is** and how it **affects what you do**.

Mary's attitude towards worship...

■ *It's both internal and intense.*

The opposite would be external and shallow... which is intolerable to God... Isaiah 29:13 **This people draws near to Me with their mouth and with their lips they do not honor Me, but have removed their heart from Me....**

Worship is not a result from an outside stimulus... all an outside stimulus can do is muster up emotion... and many confuse stirred emotion with worship.

Listen to how the hymn begins... (46) **My soul magnifies the Lord...** *megalyno*...mega = large... *megalyno* or Magnifies means to enlarge from small to large to humungus... to increase in size... to enlarge...**the verb tense here is to continue to increase in size indefinitely...**

Which means worship should never cease... it is in all of life and is ever increasing in intensity.

Mary... from the depths of her heart...the reality of God is more and more realized... getting larger and larger and larger in Mary's soul... you think God is great.... But here that realization and elevation of Him increases exponentially... TRUE WORSHIP INCREASES CONTINUOUSLY...IT DOESN'T STOP WHEN THE SONGS GET OVER...IN FACT... TRUE WORSHIP DOESN'T START WHEN THE SONGS BEGIN!

We say every week after the announcements and prayer which calls us to worship... *please stand and join us in worship*... it's normal to think... worship is beginning... NO!... worship should just be continuing!...that is simply a call to join your worship with other brothers and sisters in Christ corporately.

Many think worship is the result of being stimulated... worship happens when you get into the right setting... play the right music...dim the lights...put yourself in a certain position or place... **Mary breaks out in song because of what is inside of her...**

It isn't the song that makes Mary want to worship God... It's what is in her heart...her soul...her spirit... she has an overwhelming desire to worship...to praise God...the song is a result, an expression of the worshipping going on inside of Mary... she is so full of the realization of who God is that she spills over in expression.

This is a proper understanding of worship music!... Worship music is a response... it is not something to put you in the mood to worship...THERE ISN'T ANY MUSIC THAT CAN MAKE YOU WANT TO WORSHIP...ALL MUSIC CAN DO IS MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD OR BAD IN CHURCH...WORSHIP IS NOT MUSIC... **WORSHIP IS WHAT'S INSIDE AND CAN'T STAY THERE!**

The biggest introvert can't help but becoming an extrovert..

Mary's heart wells up in understanding who GOD IS!... the appropriate response is to break out in worship... and she does... in the form of a song.

To magnify something or someone is to give it an extraordinarily large place in your life...one's desires are shaped by and around the thing that is magnified in your life... your actions and activities are shaped around it... **WHAT DO YOU MAGNIFY IN YOUR SOUL?**

We all magnify something!... money?...power?...success?...your body?... fishing?...hunting?... football?... *I'll tread lightly there.*

Mary magnified the Lord.... An extraordinary large part of her *soul* was exalting the Lord...how much is that?... how much soul makes up the self?...how much of us is soul?...how much of Mary did her soul take up?

Scottish preacher of two centuries ago...George MacDonald said ***“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”***

I believe that true lasting Joy... is directly linked to your soul... what is the soul?... The Bible doesn’t give us a neat, concise definition... but we can make a few conclusions... ***The soul is not physical***...our bodies are physical... when we die the body turns to dust... the soul continues on in eternity (*where it spends eternity is directly related to what you magnify in your life!*).

The soul is central to your personhood... it is who you are... you are not a person because you have a body... you are a person because you have a soul....Is the soul the same as your spirit?...Mary says **My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoiced in my God and Savior.**

Hebrews 4:12 makes a distinction:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Word of God can separate the two... so they are distinct from each other...what’s the difference?...the soul is “who” you are...your person... and ***your spirit is what moves you...an inner force which animates a person in one direction or another***...it’s the “mover”...a dynamic force.

The Christian has the Holy Spirit... the divine mover!... the Holy Spirit takes our spirit and guides us... **My soul magnifies and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior...** Mary’s soul and spirit are in alignment!....when they are in alignment... joy is a result!... Mary “rejoices”!

Hebrews was telling us that the soul and spirit can be out of alignment with each other...they are working in opposition of each other...and God’s Word is so powerful it can separate them... I think that was going on with Paul in Romans 7 when he said *I do the very thing I do not want to do*... the battle with the flesh... but also the soul and spirit at odds.

You want true joy?... magnify the Lord increasingly in your soul...have Him consume your soul...and then align your spirit with your soul...That’s where Mary was....worship is the key to joy...

3. Mary’s joy comes through humility.

Read verse 48

This is an interesting verse... it seems a bit contradictory... *I am humble... everyone through all of history will call me blessed*... sounds almost boasting... it’s actually a great model for us in

handling God's blessings... always in humility.... Its always realizing whatever blessings we get from God... it is from His grace not our goodness...

Humility is defined in the dictionary: *A modest or low view of one's own importance, humbleness.* I think a biblical definition could be something like... ***an understanding of just how low one's importance really is!...even when God "blesses" you.***

The first definition says you know you are great, very important... but you are going to keep a lower opinion of yourself...

Mary knows how lowly she is... historians tell us that in New Testament times... girls got married between the ages of 12 and 15... I think it is reasonable to say that Mary was 13 when she got word of her pregnancy... one of the lowest *things* in those days were women...

She's just an ordinary simple girl from an ordinary simple town... Nazareth... not the center of cosmopolitan life!... **Can anything good come from Nazareth?** (John 1:46)... it would be like being from Bovil...

Mary was far removed from the elite... the "important" people...even after the birth of Jesus she never had any prominence... the early church didn't elevate her to any special position... that came later... she's only referred to once in Scripture after Jesus went to the cross...

She calls HERSELF the lowliest of titles... *a bonds slave... the Lord's slave*...but Mary knew that her lowliness far exceeded her social status and position... she knew she was a sinner in need of a Savior... (47) **and my spirit has rejoiced in GOD MY..... SAVIOR.**

[That presents a problem for those who view Mary as sinless!...only sinners need a Savior!]

I made a note a few years ago, I don't know who said it... *Only humble people can worship—proud people can't worship God; they're too busy worshipping themselves.* PRIDE IS THE WORSHIP OF SELF.

The dominant god competing for the throne of divine rule is... YOU!...true worship can only come from a humble heart...I believe that, that is true for joy... only true everlasting joy can come from a humble heart...

**My soul magnifies who?...me?...no... the Lord
And my spirit has rejoiced in God... who?... my Savior!**

Not **God my creator....God my sustainer of life... God my eternal righteous judge**... Here's the thing... If God is just my creator... I don't think I would break out in worship...*Thanks for creating all this*... I don't think that would hit my heart... my soul... my spirit.

To be honest...I think I would have a hard time worshipping God if all He was, was a judge....specifically MY judge... all He could do is condemn me!....praise the Lord!...**WE WORSHIP HIM BECAUSE HE IS OUR SAVIOR!**

It's not that a baby was born to her that amazes Mary...as amazing as that was to be... IT IS THAT **THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD** IS TO BE BORN TO HER!!... And His name will be Jesus...the Greek form of Yeshua his Hebrew name...the modern name Joshua... in the English it means **God is salvation!**

Quickly... the rest of the song shows us Mary's motive for breaking out in worship... another way to put it... Mary's reasons for expressing what was overflowing from her heart...she sees and grasps:

1. What God is doing for her.

Read verses 48-49

Realizing what God is doing in your life should help drive your worship... Mary realized she was a sinner in need of a Savior... she knows God owes her NOTHING... She knows she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus completely by God's grace... she didn't do anything to deserve it...

And what is the blessing?... **all generations will count me as blessed** why? **Because the mighty One has done great things for me...** if you are struggling in your worship... look back at all the ways God has blessed you... if you have a mental block... just think how *Almighty God stooped down and saved a wretch like me!*

Then... Mary sees and grasps

2. What God will do for others in future generations.

Read verse 50

By the way... Mary knew her Bible... which would be the Old Testament... some have concluded that in this song there are over 12 references to the Old Testament... verse 50 is a quote from Psalm 103:17

This mercy isn't just for me!... The salvation of God is for all coming generations who follow Jesus Christ.....the whole world for every generation will share in Mary's blessing!

Mary realizes what God was doing for her... the blessings He would give future generation and she sees and grasps...

3. What God did for others in the past

Read verses 51-56

He has done

He has scattered

He has brought down

He has exalted

He has filled
He has sent away
He has given help
He has spoken

HE has...He has... He has... He has... God is a very busy God!... He has raised the righteous,
brought down the unrighteous... He has disciplined His people.... He has blessed His people...
He has shown His mercy throughout history.

As revealed in her song... Mary could see all of redemptive history... the past, present and
future...God is faithful... God is Mighty... God is just... God is loving... Mary is joyful.