



## ADVENT 2023

MARY'S SONG | LUKE 1:46-55

One of the wonderful things about Christmas are the songs.

Some of them are playful like “Frosty the Snowman” and “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer.” Others sentimental—“I Saw Momma Kissing Santa Claus” or “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas.” Some, however, are deeply profound. While I recognize the irony, I still pause in reverence every time I hear “O Holy Night” piped in over the intercom in a big box store.

One of the unique features of Luke’s gospel is that he introduces us to the songs of the season. Zechariah celebrates the birth of John in Song. The angels break into song when they announce the birth of Jesus. The aged Simeon responds with a hymn of praise when he is able to hold the small child that will one day redeem Israel.

But the first song in Luke’s gospel, and in a very real sense the very first Christmas song ever, is Mary’s song. Few songs take us to the heart of Christmas quite like Mary’s song. In three short stanzas, Mary celebrates God’s remarkable grace in including her in his story, his remarkable strength on behalf of the weak and lowly, and his remarkable faithfulness in keeping his promises.

There is no better song to turn to as we consider the wonder of Christ’s first advent.

### **GOD’S REMARKABLE GRACE IN INCLUDING MARY IN HIS STORY (vv. 46-49)**

*46 And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.*

Mary’s song begins with her story and concludes with Israel’s story. She is blown away that God would choose her to be a part of his story.

1. How does Mary describe God?
2. Why is it important that we think of God is this way?
3. How does Mary describe herself?
4. Why is it important that we think of ourselves in this way?
5. The word for “humble” might better be translated “lowly.” It refers to those without status or rank. Whenever Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple Luke notes that they offer a sacrifice of two young doves—the sacrifice reserved for the poorest of the poor.

Paul reminded the believers in Corinth,

*“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:26-30).*

- a. What is remarkable about God’s choice of Mary?
- b. What is remarkable about the kind of people God chooses in general?
- c. How should these truths shape our posture in approaching God?

### **GOD’S REMARKABLE STRENGTH ON BEHALF OF THE WEAK AND LOWLY (vv. 50-53)**

*50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

The heart of Mary’s song are the middle stanzas where she celebrates God’s remarkable strength on behalf of the weak and lowly. Verse 52 forms a chiasm (a Hebrew literary device for calling special attention to a particular phrase or saying). The first and last lines emphasize God’s opposition to the rich and powerful and the middle two lines emphasize his compassionate for the weak and lowly.

These verses pick up on an important biblical theme. Both James and Peter remind us, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

1. Why would God bring “down rulers from their thrones” and send “the rich away empty?”
2. Why would God “lift up the humble” and “fill the hungry with good things?”
3. Jesus reminds us, “All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Luke 14:11).”
  - a. How should these passages shape our posture in approaching God?
  - b. How should they shape our posture toward the weak and lowly?

### **GOD’S REMARKABLE FAITHFULNESS IN KEEPING HIS PROMISES (vv. 54-55)**

*54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”*

1. Mary begins her song by referring to herself as the Lord’s “servant.” She ends the song by referring to Israel as the Lord’s “servant.”
  - a. What does the concept of being the Lord’s “servant” tell us about God’s purposes for his people?
  - b. ...and for each one of us?
  - c. How do we fulfill this role as we go about our daily lives?
2. Why is it important to remember that God is a God who always keeps his promises?
3. What are some particular promises God has made that are meaningful to you in this season?