

North Summit Church
Above Every Name: Introduction
November 23, 2025

Announcements:

- CDF Capitol Introduction
- Cuba Mission Trip
- Bulletin

Introduction:

- Happy Thanksgiving weekend.
- Before we dive into our text this morning, I want you to notice something significant about today's date on the church calendar.
- Today is not only Thanksgiving Sunday - it's also Christ the King Sunday, the final Sunday of the liturgical year before we enter Advent next week.
- There's wisdom in paying attention to what the broader church has recognized for centuries: that before we celebrate Christ's first coming at Christmas, we need to remember his final coming as King. Before the manger, the throne. Before the baby, the sovereign King who will return to reign.
- This isn't just coincidence, it is intentional and has deep theological significance.
- **"We will never truly have hearts of thanksgiving until we recognize the supremacy of Christ and our absolute need for him."**
- This morning we are starting our advent series—taking an intermission from the book of Hebrews—so turn with me to **Luke 1:46-55**
- We're going to read what's come to be known as the Magnificat - Mary's song.
- And I want to suggest to you this morning that this young woman understood something that we often miss in our Thanksgiving celebrations: that gratitude and humility are inseparable, and that both flow from recognizing who Jesus really is.

[Read Luke 1:46-55]

Now, before Mary sang this song, something extraordinary happened to her. An angel appeared and announced that she would conceive and bear a son - the Son of the Most High, whose kingdom would have no end. And when Mary asked the logical question - "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" - the angel gave her an answer that should make us catch our breath.

- Look at verse 35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."
- That word "overshadow" - is used very intentionally.
- It's temple language. It's the same word used in the Greek Old Testament to describe what happened when God's glory filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34-35

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled [overshadowed] on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

- Do you see what's happening? Mary's body is being consecrated, purified, set apart as the dwelling place of God himself. The same glory that filled the tabernacle in the wilderness is now filling the womb of a virgin in Nazareth. God is taking up residence not in a building, but in a person.

[COMMUNION]

- This is why Mary's song matters for us today.
- Because in her response to becoming the vehicle for the incarnation, she teaches us the only appropriate posture before the King who humbles himself to dwell with us.
- Over the next five weeks, leading up to Christmas Eve, we're going to journey through Advent with five biblical witnesses who encountered the coming King - five faithful people who recognized that the baby in the manger bore the name above every name.
- We're calling this series "Above Every Name," and it starts today with Mary's song.

- This morning, I want us to discover three things from Mary's Magnificat that should shape not just our Thanksgiving, but our entire posture before Christ the King:
 - **First, God purifies unworthy vessels for his purposes**
 - **Second, God's Kingdom redefines the role of human hierarchies**
 - **Third, Gratitude flows from recognizing God's sovereign grace in midst of our insufficiency**

GOD PURIFIES UNWORTHY VESSELS FOR HIS PURPOSES

- As we said before, when the angel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will "overshadow" her, he's using temple language.
- But here's what we need to understand: the temple itself was never the end goal. It was always pointing to something greater.
- The writer of Hebrews makes this clear. The earthly tabernacle - with all its gold, its curtains, its consecrated spaces - was "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven" (Hebrews 8:5). The sacrifices, the rituals, the very architecture - all of it was pointing forward to a greater reality.
- That greater reality was about to take up residence within her.
- The tabernacle had to be purified before God's glory could dwell there. Seven days of consecration. Blood. Anointing oil. Specific rituals prescribed by God himself. Why? Because holy God cannot dwell in an unholy place.
- Mary wasn't chosen because she had achieved some level of holiness. In fact, by every human measure, Mary was exactly the wrong choice.
 - A teenage girl. Unmarried.
 - From Nazareth - a town so insignificant that Nathanael would later ask, "Can anything good come from there?"
 - She had no wealth, no influence, no platform. She was, in her own words, of "humble state" - lowly, poor, insignificant.
- **So why her?**
 - Look at her response in verse 38: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

- **Mary was chosen not because of her prestige, but because of her humble heart and her willingness to allow God to use her for his purposes.**
- This is the pattern of God throughout Scripture. He doesn't choose vessels based on their inherent worthiness. He purifies unworthy vessels and then fills them with his glory.
 - Moses - a murderer and fugitive - becomes the deliverer.
 - David - the youngest son, overlooked by his own father - becomes the king.
 - Peter - impulsive, prone to failure - becomes the rock.
- **And now Mary - poor, young, insignificant - becomes the means of the Incarnation itself.**
- Think about what that means. Every person who has ever encountered Jesus - from the shepherds to the disciples to you and me - can trace their connection to the Savior through Mary. She carried him. She gave birth to him. She nursed him, raised him, watched him grow.
- That's a connection to Christ that is absolutely unique to her among all people. Not because she earned it, but because she was the one God chose to endow with this gift, and she recognized this gift and surrendered to it.

"I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

- Church, God is still in the business of purifying unworthy vessels for his purposes. And if you're sitting here this morning thinking, "I'm not qualified. I'm not worthy. I don't have what it takes" - good. You're exactly the kind of vessel God loves to use.
- The question isn't whether you're worthy. The question is whether you're willing.
- Are you willing to say, "I am the Lord's servant"? Are you willing to surrender to God's sovereign hand, even when you don't understand the plan?
- Are you willing to be overshadowed, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and let him accomplish his purposes through you?
- **God doesn't need your credentials. He needs your surrender.**

GOD'S KINGDOM REDEFINES THE ROLE OF HUMAN HIERARCHIES

- Now listen to what Mary sings about this King:

"He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty."

- For centuries, people have read this as revolutionary - God tearing down all earthly power structures and starting from scratch. And there's truth in that reading. But I want to suggest something more nuanced.
- **God is not abolishing the order within creation that he himself established.** He created authority structures. He ordained leadership. From the family to the church to the state, God has established order in his creation.
- Paul writes in Romans 13:1, "There is no authority except that which God has established." Authority and hierarchy isn't evil. It's not something to be completely done away with. It's part of God's good design.
- So what is Mary singing about? What does it mean that God brings down rulers and lifts up the humble?
- **She's announcing that all authority must surrender to God's sovereignty, and that the role of all authority is to function according to his sacrificial, self-giving love, according to His purposes.**
- This is Christ the King Sunday. And the King we're celebrating didn't come to abolish authority - he came to redefine its purpose.
- Look at how Jesus himself describes kingdom leadership

Mark 10:42-45

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Do you see it? Jesus doesn't say, "There will be no leaders in my kingdom." He says, "Leaders in my kingdom function differently."
- Authority in God's kingdom is about laying down your life for those you lead. It's about shepherding and guiding. It's about recognizing that all authority is delegated authority - you don't own it, you steward it. And you steward it according to God's purposes, not your own.
- This is what Mary's Song reveals. When she sings about rulers being brought down, she's not singing about the elimination of rulers. She's singing about the judgment that comes when rulers use their authority for self-exaltation rather than service.
 - God scatters the proud - those who think their authority is about them.
 - God brings down rulers who lord it over others rather than laying down their lives.
 - God sends the rich away empty when they've used their resources for self-indulgence rather than generosity.
 - But God lifts up the humble - those who recognize their authority is delegated.
 - God fills the hungry - those who know their need and serve out of that recognition.
 - God exalts the lowly - those who use whatever position they have for his purposes, not their own.
- The pattern of God's kingdom is the Incarnation itself.

Philippians 2

"Christ Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant."

- Christ has all authority. He didn't abdicate it - he redefined it.
 - Authority in God's kingdom looks like God becoming man.
 - It looks like the King washing feet.
 - It looks like the Creator dying for the creation.
- Whether you're a parent, a manager, a pastor, a teacher, or a friend with influence - you have authority somewhere.

- **The question is: How are you using it?**
- Are you using it to be served, or to serve? Are you using it for your own glory, or for God's purposes? Are you lording it over others, or laying down your life for them?
- **This is what it means to recognize Christ's supremacy.** His authority is absolute - and yet he laid it down for us. And if we claim to bow before this King, we must lead the way he leads. We must serve the way he serves.
- God's kingdom doesn't eliminate hierarchies. It redeems them. It redefines their purpose. It transforms authority from something that exploits into something that sacrifices.
- And when authority functions this way - when leaders lay down their lives for those they lead - that's when God's kingdom breaks into this world in tangible, transformative ways.

GRATITUDE FLOWS FROM RECOGNIZING GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE IN THE MIDST OF OUR INSUFFICIENCY

- **This brings us back to where we started: Thanksgiving.**
 - Because Mary's song is, at its core, a song of gratitude.

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant."

- Notice what makes Mary grateful. It's not that she's achieved something impressive. It's not that she's risen to some position of power or prestige.
 - It's that **God has been mindful of her** - that in her lowliness, in her insufficiency, God saw her and chose her.

Regardless of where we find ourselves, it isn't about our position or our affluence. All of this is a gift of God to be used for his purposes.

- This is the key to genuine thanksgiving: **Understanding that in every situation, it is simply the grace of God that allows us to draw one more breath.**
 - You woke up this morning - grace.

- You're sitting here in this building - grace.
- You have people you love and who love you - grace.
- You have the gospel - grace.
- You have Christ - grace upon grace.
- **None of it is owed to you. None of it is earned. All of it is a gift.**

1 Corinthians 4:7

"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

- Everything you have - your health, your family, your job, your home, your abilities, your very life - is received. It's all gift. And when you recognize that, when you really see it, thanksgiving isn't something you have to work up. It's the natural overflow of a heart that's been captured by grace.
- But here's where we so often miss it: We think gratitude is for when things are going well. When we've had a good year. When our bank account is healthy. When our relationships are solid. When life is comfortable.
- Mary destroys that thinking. She's pregnant out of wedlock in a culture that could stone her for it. She's about to face shame, scandal, and struggle. Her life is about to get incredibly hard.
 - And she sings. Why? Because **all of life is a gift, and one to be lived for God's glory.**
- **Not just the comfortable parts.** Not just the successful parts. All of it. The hard, the confusing, the painful - even these are opportunities to live for God's glory. Even in these, God's sovereign grace is at work.
- This is what it means to recognize Christ's supremacy. He is Lord not just of your victories, but of your valleys. He is King not just when life makes sense, but when it doesn't.
- His sovereign grace is at work, even more abundantly, in your insufficiency.
 - Because it's in our insufficiency that we learn to depend on him. It's in our weakness that his strength is perfected. It's in our lowliness that we're positioned to receive his lifting up.

- Mary teaches us that gratitude isn't based on circumstances. It's based on recognizing the God who is sovereign over all circumstances and who works all things - even hard things, even impossible things - together for his purposes and our good.
- **So this Thanksgiving, the question isn't: "What good things happened this year that I can thank God for?"**
- The question is: "Can I see God's sovereign grace at work even in my insufficiency? Can I trust that every breath is gift? Can I live all of life for his glory, not just the parts that feel successful?"

CONCLUSION

- We're one week away from Advent. Next week we'll meet Isaiah the prophet, who saw the Names the coming child would bear: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Then Elizabeth, Zechariah, Joseph, and finally the shepherds - five witnesses who recognized the supremacy of Christ before most of the world had any idea who he was.
- But it starts here. Understanding the power of the incarnation, and being reminded that:
 - **God purifies unworthy vessels for his purposes.**
 - **God's kingdom redefines the role of human hierarchies.**
 - **Gratitude flows from recognizing God's sovereign grace in the midst of our insufficiency.**
- This is Christ the King Sunday. We're acknowledging that Jesus is Lord, that his is the Name above every name, that at his name every knee will bow.
- But what kind of King? The kind who comes in the womb of a willing servant. The kind who redefines authority as sacrifice. The kind whose sovereign grace meets us in our insufficiency and says, "You're exactly who I want to use."
- This Thanksgiving weekend, let Mary's song become yours:
 - "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."
 - Not because you're worthy, but because he purifies unworthy vessels.
 - Not because you've earned position, but because all authority exists to serve his purposes.

- Not because your life is perfect, but because God's sovereign grace is sufficient in your insufficiency.

The King has come. He's coming again. And every breath between is grace upon grace.

Prayer:

Father, we bow before you this morning as Mary did - as servants, as unworthy vessels, as recipients of sovereign grace we could never deserve.

Thank you for being mindful of us in our humble state. Thank you for choosing to purify us and fill us with your Spirit. Thank you for not waiting until we were impressive to call us, but for meeting us in our insufficiency.

Forgive us for the times we've used authority selfishly rather than sacrificially. Forgive us for thinking our positions and possessions are about us rather than about your purposes. Transform us into leaders who lay down their lives for those they serve.

And Lord, give us grateful hearts. Not just when life is comfortable, but in every circumstance. Help us see that every breath is your grace, that all of life is gift, and that even our insufficiency is an opportunity to experience your sufficiency.

Prepare our hearts for Advent. Make us ready to receive the King who came as a baby, who served as a sacrifice, who is even now reigning as sovereign Lord.

We glorify you. Our souls magnify your name.

In Jesus's name - the Name above every name - we pray.

Amen.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. Mary's response to God's call was, "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled." What is one area of your life where God might be calling you to surrender, but you've been holding back because you feel unqualified or unworthy? What would it look like for you to say "yes" to God in that area this week?

2. The sermon emphasized that authority in God's kingdom is about laying down your life for those you lead. Think about the areas where you have influence or authority (as a parent, manager, friend, teacher, etc.). How are you currently using that authority - to be served or to serve? What is one practical way you could lead more sacrificially this week?

3. Mary sang about God being "mindful of her humble state" even though she was facing a difficult and uncertain future. When you look at your current circumstances - both the blessings and the challenges - can you identify ways God's sovereign grace is at work? What makes it difficult to maintain a posture of gratitude when life doesn't go as planned?

4. The sermon challenged us that "all of life is a gift, and one to be lived for God's glory." As we enter the Thanksgiving holiday, what's the difference between being grateful for God's gifts versus being grateful to God as the Giver? How might that shift in perspective change the way you approach this week's celebrations?