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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: Christmas Celebration
Message: Mary's Song of Praise

Transcribed Message
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I love the children's choir. I always get something in my eye when those kids are up here singing. I do when you guys sing, too. So, I mean, it's not just the children. So, we're so grateful.

Well, hey, I want to start off this morning with a very simple four-question quiz. So, you keep track for yourself. As we always say here at Covenant, when we have a quiz, do your own work. And if you get them all right, you come up and see me afterwards, I might very well have something for you. All right, here we go.

Question number one, focusing kind of on the gospel of Luke, where we're looking this morning. In Luke's account of the Christmas story, how many songs or poems are recorded in chapters one and two? Is it one? Is it two? Is it three? Is it four? The answer is, do your own work. No, the answer is four. There are four songs.

Who didn't? We'll see if this keeps going. We're going to have to do something a little special. Who didn't sing a song? Who didn't sing a song? Mary, Zachariah, Joseph, or Simeon? Who did not sing a song? And the answer is, it is Joseph. Joseph did not sing a song. Now, I don't want any of you guys saying the reason I don't sing during congregational singing is because Joseph didn't sing a song. We don't know that he didn't sing a song. It's just not recorded, right?

How about number three? These songs are sometimes called hymns. They're sometimes called raps or canticles or psalms. Which of those do you think hymns, raps, canticles or psalms? The answer is they are canticles. A canticle is a song in scripture that is drawn from any book other than the psalms. So, it's a song that draws on Old Testament scripture other than the psalms.

Number four, who said the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear. That is not in the Bible, but it seems like you all knew that that was not in the Bible. But the guy's name does start with a B and his name is Buddy. Buddy. I am not a movie guy, but

that's from Elf and I apologize for interjecting that. But Mary also, I think, would have said the same thing.

How do you spread the Christmas message? Well, you sing a song loud and clear for all to hear. So, we're going to do that. We're going to look at Mary's song. You know, of all the story lines of the Christmas story, and there are a lot of them, aren't there? I mean, there are angels and there are shepherds and there's wise men and there's Bethlehem and there's a star and there's a manger. I mean, the list just goes on and on about different story lines that we look at at Christmas. But it seems to me the most significant, the most compelling of all the story lines of Christmas has to be through the eyes of Mary.

The story of Christmas through Mary's eyes is so special. It's so unique. It's so singular. It's just so amazing to realize that God took this young lady and used her in this incredibly dramatic and amazing way. So, it is really through Mary's eyes that we have this compelling story told to us in the gospel of Luke. And you know what so often happens in life, and it certainly happens in church history, there's this thing called the pendulum. A pendulum swings from one side and then it swings back to another side. And as the whole story of a pendulum goes, we swing too far sometimes the other way, don't we? And I think within the Protestant tradition, we've kind of seen the pendulum swing a little bit too far the other way. We don't always know what to do with Mary. We don't always know what to do with Mary because we understand that the Church of Rome has elevated Mary to a place that, just to be honest, I don't see in Scripture. I don't see in the Bible anywhere that Mary is said to be sinless. I don't see in the Bible that she said to be a perpetual virgin. In fact, the writers of the gospels give the names of her other children. I don't see in the Bible that she's enthroned in some way in heaven. I don't see in the Bible that we're to pray to her. I don't see that about Mary.

But what I do see is I think something that we should honor, that we should look at, that we should rejoice in, that we should be amazed by, because it is an incredible story that's recorded for us in the gospel of Luke. Let's go to the background of this story. You're so familiar with it. And it all begins, of course, in Mary's experience with the angel Gabriel coming to her. And of course, when angels come, they always come unexpected, don't they? You don't get a text message from an angel saying, hey, I'm going to be there in the morning. Don't be

surprised. No, it's always surprising. It's always compelling. It's always amazing. And that was Mary's experience. The angel comes and literally turns her life and her world upside down.

And of course, that's the underlying reason that we look at Mary in such amazement. I mean, here she is. She's a young lady. She's probably not more than 14 or 15. She's a teenager. She's had her world just incredibly turned around by the message and the appearance of Gabriel, telling her that she is going to be pregnant by a miraculous conception. How do you even begin to process everything that Mary heard from Gabriel? That's part of the reason why we should be amazed at this very special young lady. 14 or 15 years old. Are you kidding me?

Years ago, we had a ministry here at Covenant called Teen Mops, and we had 40, 50, 60, sometimes more young ladies come on our campus, and we ministered to them every Monday night. And I remember one year, I was asked to come and just share a Christmas message with these young ladies. They were either pregnant or already had their babies, unwed, teenagers, and they were facing a lot of challenges. And I thought, you know, I'm going to share with them the story of Mary. I'm going to tell them that there was another lady. There was another young teenage girl. Yeah, it's not a one-to-one correspondence, but there's a lot of things that they were dealing with and they were thinking about. And Mary had to do some of that same stuff. I have to tell you, as I shared that story, I don't know how many of them had ever thought about the fact that that was true of Mary in the Bible, that she was in some way kind of in their life experience. I don't know how many of them had ever thought about that. But as I shared that story with them, I can tell you that I've never spoken to a group that looked more compelled by the story that they were hearing, except maybe you guys right now. But I just think the thought of the mother of Jesus was kind of like what we're dealing with in some way. And so that's kind of the background to this story.

And we see this story in Luke's gospel. Verse 38, look at the response of Mary to this message. She says, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be according to your word. That was Mary's response. I mean, there is initially anxiety. There's some fear. There's certainly uncertainty. But then she finds herself saying, I'm the servant of the Lord. Let it be according to your word. And then the angel says to her, and oh, Mary, by the way, your older cousin Elizabeth is also unexpectedly pregnant with a child. She's six months along.

We read next that Mary, with haste, makes a trip to see Elizabeth some distance away from where she was. And when they get together, we have this amazing interaction, this incredible time between these two ladies, both dealing with unexpected pregnancies. One of them, nearly a senior citizen, late, much, much later than she ever expected to have a child. And the other is a teenager, an unwed teenager. And you know, their interaction and their conversations had to be just on a different level than any one of us could probably ever realize or understand as they talked about what it was that God was doing in their lives and just the miracle that they were dealing with. We read specifically in Luke's gospel that Elizabeth rejoiced in Mary's pregnancy. We know that Mary had great joy in Elizabeth's pregnancy.

And then we read, of course, that John the Baptist, this little six-month-old baby in Elizabeth's womb is doing somersaults. He's leaping for joy, Luke says, and expressing even within utero and understanding that they're in the presence of the soon to be born Son of God, which brings us to Mary's song, Mary's song of praise.

I think within this passage of Mary's song of praise, we kind of have an answer to the question, Mary, did you know? And Mary, what did you know? Because Mary tells us three things that she knows and that she knew in light of all that was happening in her life. Let's look at these together. The first thing is that she knows who God is. She knows who God is and she knows that he is worthy to be praised. His name is worthy to be magnified. We just sang about it. Who else is worthy? And that's where we get the idea of Mary's Magnificat. Magnificat is the Latin word for magnify. And Mary knows that God is worthy to be praised. He is worthy to be magnified.

It was A.W. Tozer that said what we think about God, what comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. What are our thoughts about God, our thoughts about God, the thing that comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. And I suppose for a lot of people in our world, they don't ever even think about God, which says, I guess, from Tozer's point of view, a whole lot about how it is that they look at life, how they see life for other people. Their idea of God is he's here to give me what I want and what I need. And I go to him when I want it and when I need it.

Well, Mary had a very different idea about God. She understood the bigness of her God. She understood the worthiness of her God to be worshiped. Her soul, she says, magnifies the Lord. Her spirit rejoices in God, my savior. You see, Mary's song is saturated with scripture. That's why it's called a canticle. It's saturated with scripture. Get this. We've got this 14 or 15-year-old teenager, not married, and she's pregnant now with the Lord Jesus. And she begins to acknowledge and worship and give praise to God. And the song that she writes is a song that's saturated with scripture. She's a teenager who knew the word of God. Talk about what her parents did in her life. They didn't have a Bible like we do. They had the scriptures that they passed on by means of largely oral tradition. Yes, there were some copies, but what a tribute to her parents. What a tribute to this young lady. She's a teenager who so knew the word of God that when this song begins to resonate in her heart and mind and in her soul and spirit, it's just filled with scripture. What an incredible example of one who worshiped and stood in awe of God.

The second thing that Mary knew she knew what God has done and what he has done is he's poured out his grace and his mercy in her life. That's what he's done. Not only is he worthy to be praised, but he has poured out his grace and mercy in her life. There is a life principle that's all through scripture. It's the way God deals with us. It's the way God deals with humanity. And that life principle is that he lifts up the humble and he humbles the proud. He lifts up the humble and he humbles the proud. Jesus is going to come and he's going to turn things upside down. That's what he's going to do. That's what he's doing in Mary's life. And that's what he does when Jesus comes. He literally turns things on their head, doesn't he? He humbles the proud. He lifts up the humble. That's what he does.

Mary is this almost certainly poor girl. She's from probably a lower socioeconomic family. Nothing influential, nothing famous, nothing profound about her family. She's engaged to a carpenter son. She's not from the big city of Jerusalem. She's from this little backwater village town. There's nothing on her resume that's impressive or draws attention to itself. She's humble in her heart before the Lord. God lifts up the humble and he brings down the proud. So, Mary says, I'm not magnifying myself, I'm magnifying the Lord. Blessed is God for what he has done for who he is. It's all of God's grace. It's all of God's mercy.

You know, when the apostle Paul says in Galatians chapter four, when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son. And it's kind of interesting and unique, isn't it, that God would pick the first century for the sending of his son. I mean, why not pick the 21st century? I mean, can you imagine this happening in the 21st century? Can you imagine the explosion on social media, the instant fame of Mary in our context? I mean, it would be “# going to be the mom of the Messiah.” You know, it'd be on TikTok. It'd be on Instagram. It'd be on YouTube. It'd be Mary, right? It'd be Mary holding up her phone, taking a selfie recording. I'm just so surprised. I'm so humbled. I can't believe it. You know, pray for me. I don't know. It's kind of a big deal, right? Messiah's mom. It would go viral, wouldn't it? Not Mary. Mary, she doesn't boast in herself. Her boast is in the Lord. She magnifies the Lord with her soul and with her spirit. It's all of God's grace.

And then there's this third thing. She knows what God will do. She knows who he is. He's a big God. He's able to do the impossible. He knows that she knows what he's done. He's pouring out his grace and his mercy in her life in a way that she could never have imagined. But now that is what he will do.

And you notice that he is one who keeps his promises. So. Mary says in verses 54, he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever. And then if you look at verses 51, 52, 53, four times, she says he has done this. He has. Well, he hasn't done it yet, but she puts it in her song in past tense. Why? Because she is so certain that he's going to do it. She's so sure that he's a promise keeper. He's promised that he is going to send a redeemer, to send a savior. He made that promise all the way, she says, back to Abraham. And now he's keeping that promise. God, you're a promise keeping God. You keep your word. You're trustworthy. I want to magnify your name.

I can't help but think that as the years went on from this moment recorded in Luke one, when Mary gets this amazing message and goes and hangs out with Elizabeth for three months, I can't help but think that many times in her life she rehearsed this song that the Lord had put on her heart. And certainly, as she and Joseph are making their way to Bethlehem on that fateful night, that song must have been ringing in her ears that night when Jesus is born. She

must have been in her soul and in her spirit, magnifying the Lord as she realizes this is it. This is the time it's happening.

Don't you think that this song was going through her mind when they take baby Jesus and they go to the temple and Simeon dedicates him to the Lord and breaks into his own song? Don't you think the song was on her heart when she watches Jesus after they had left him behind for three days in Jerusalem and she comes back and there he is in the temple? He's confounding the religious leaders as he brings to them a truth that they have never encountered before. Don't you think that when she saw Jesus being nailed to the cross, don't you think that song was going through her heart and her mind? My soul magnifies the Lord. She lifts up his name, recognizing who he is, what he's done, what he will do in providing a savior.

Like Mary, you and I can have favor with God. Like Mary, we can have favor with God, not because of who we are, and not because of what we can do, certainly not what we can do for him, but we can have favor with God, and we can step into the truth of this song if we believe what Mary believed. And we call it the good news. We call it the gospel.

And what Mary believed and what we're called on to believe to really be like Mary, have God's favor on us, to experience all that he intends for us, is we believe that Jesus is God's Son. We believe that we have sinned and fallen short of God's righteousness. We believe that he died on the cross for our sins. We believe that and we understand that and we embrace that for ourselves. Then Mary's song is not just Mary's Magnificat. It's not just another song in the Bible. It's really the testimony of our own heart. It's something that we can step into and experience.

And when we believe the things that God has said make up the gospel, Jesus is God's son. Sin has separated us from him. To believe that what Jesus did on the cross was all that needed to be done. God forgives our sin and he gives us eternal life. That's Mary's song of praise. We want it to be yours as well. We ask you to consider the good news of the gospel this morning. And if you've never trusted Jesus as your personal Savior, that's something that you can do even in the quietness of these moments. Just agreeing with God that his Son came into this world because God so loved the world. He died a terrible death on that cross for you and for me. And what we need to do is to believe that that's all that needs to be done.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you for this amazing story of how you stepped into this young teenage girl's life, Mary, and how she gave her life as a servant of yours to be used by you in bringing about this amazing, amazing, miraculous birth. Father, we thank you for her obedience. We thank you for her worship. We thank you for her praise. We thank you that we can step into this truth ourselves today, hundreds and thousands of years later, not because of who we are, not because of what we can do for you, but because of what you've done for us. Lord, let us step into and magnify your name because we do affirm and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we have life in your name. We thank you in Jesus's name. Amen.