

MARY'S SONG, OUR SONG; THE MAGNIFICAT

A sermon for Sunday, December 17, 2017, by the Rev. Dr. James Mutayoba
THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Gospel: **Luke 1:46-56** *The Song of Mary*

⁴⁶And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
⁴⁸For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
 For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
⁴⁹For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.
⁵⁰And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with His arm;
 He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
⁵²He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.
⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy,
⁵⁵As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."
⁵⁶And Mary remained with her [Elizabeth] about three months, and returned to her house."

We know we are created in God's image but only a few have been blessed to see God's glory in passing or felt God's glory by talking to him one on one.

- Abraham didn't see God's face, but he was intimate with Him.
- Moses didn't see God's face but he saw God's glory in passing.
- Little Samuel didn't see God but he conversed with him one on one.
- Mary, the Mother of our Lord, didn't see or talk to God one on one, but she talked one on one with God's angel, Gabriel, the one who stands before God's throne. Gabriel addressed her saying "**Blessed are you among women**". Gabriel declared Mary, "**Blessed among (all) women**" and told her she was commissioned to give birth to God's Son, Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. She was but a virgin. She knew no man. This seemed impossible to her; a miracle if it were to happen. The greeting echoes the **Catholic Rosary prayer**. Doesn't it?

Blessing, Hebrew **Barak(ah)**, is a fruit of God's favor; God blesses people! **Barak(ah)** or blessing is given by God upon those he chooses. To **Bless** is to pronounce or convey spiritual benefit/gift, usually pronounced by a person in authority -- a parent, or priest or pastor can pronounce a blessing.

We cannot earn a blessing. We receive blessings without specific merit. I am blessed, you are blessed because God chooses to bless us.

Mary was blessed among all women; Among the young, the old and the yet to be born because she humbly trusted in God. By saying, 'Let it be to me according to your word' (Luke 1:38), **she set a standard of faith** by her humility & obedience.

Most Protestant Churches do not give Mary her rightful place. Catholics do! I wonder whether we, the Churches of the Reformation missed something.

Gabriel said to Mary, “**You are blessed among all women?**” **What seems impossible with man is possible with God.** We believe in the God of miracles who gave **Sarah a son in her old age and Hannah a son in her barrenness.** Mary was blessed because of **her humility and her trust in God.**

In her wonder, Mary **burst into song**; the song better known as the **MAGNIFICAT** after the Latin word for **glorifying or praising** God. There is **nothing so traditionally Jewish as the Art of Singing.** The **Psalms** are examples of **Jewish songs** by **Jewish composers.** Mary stands in the long tradition of **female singers - Miriam, the sister of Moses with her tambourine** (*Exodus 15:21*); **Deborah** (*Judges 5*), **Hannah** (*1 Samuel 2:1-10*), and **Judith** were **Jewish female singers.** Churches adopted and learned **that it is okay to sing** and **dance** for the Lord in their worship and **liturgical undertakings.**

The **MAGNIFICAT** is the **song of VICTORY & a song of SALVATION.** Her praise is personal—from within **her soul and spirit.** She *glorifies the Lord*, while acknowledging His goodness. She magnifies His Holy Name. She approaches Him recognizing herself as a *humble servant*. She acknowledges Him as her sovereign Master. She represents all women who give birth to new life. She represents all the poor and the **oppressed**. She brings to God a gift of thanksgiving and praise for many reasons.

- She thanks God for saving her from **death by stoning**; if she were to be found **pregnant out of wedlock** that was the ultimate price to pay. Any girl would be scared of illegal pregnancy.
- **Secondly**, this was her first pregnancy -- first pregnancies pose a challenge.
- **Thirdly**, the looming danger of her **family disowning her to protect its honor.**
- **Finally**, fear of the word spreading through gossip networks and rumor.

There are times when **blues cover our horizons. We sing the blues, nothing but the blues because of dire human situations.** I do not know **what kind of blues** you may be going through right now. Yet in moments like these we need to **see a light beyond the tunnel.**

Instead of singing the blues, Mary glorified God, bursting into a **song of salvation**, a **victory song**, the **MAGNIFICAT**. It is **an expression** of joy for **having been spared and saved**. It is a **song of gratitude** for **having been chosen and blessed**.

Yes, sometimes we **face the inevitable** in life, the question is how we react. We are blessed in many ways; count your blessing, name them one by one,
count your blessings see what God has done!

Mary has her place in salvation history, a place of privilege and honor. Mary burst into joyous song -- saying: ‘***My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.***’ The **soul** represents **the very essence** of who we are. The **spirit represents the emotional part of our very being.** Mary **praised** God from her **soul**; she **glorified** God from her **spirit**.

It is time to **praise, glorify, & magnify God** from our souls and spirits. Since God is Spirit, we must worship Him in ***spirit and in truth***. We must employ the **best of who we are** to praise and glorify God. Our entire being should rejoice in the Lord. Let us praise God with **our very best: our spirits & our souls**. Let us join the **angelic choir** and the Shepherds in fields to glorify God.

God did not favor Mary alone; he has favored us all countless times. Mary acknowledges that she is a **SERVANT** of the Lord and thus she is honored for *all generations*. Like Mary, we are God's servants. ***The Mighty One has done great things for us in our lives -- Holy is his name.***

God is not only Mary's Savior, He is my Savior and yours. **Mary says, 'God's mercies extend to those who fear him'.** ***Do we fear him?*** God will **never stop guiding us** through situations that come our way like accidents, illness, abuse, hunger, and loneliness. God is our Savior. We ought to give God some praise.

We **may not be** good singers or songwriters, but we can truly **make a joyful noise to the Lord**. We can **speak it out!** We can **shout it out!** We can **cry it out!!** **God is our Savior.**

Let us join the natural order as we catch up with it in giving praise to God.

Praise the Lord from heavens; Praise him from the skies.

Praise him sun and moon; Praise him with the twinkling stars.

Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the thunder rumble.

And the angelic beings join us in the praise.

And after Mary had given birth to the new born King...

Suddenly a great multitude of heavenly host appeared with the angels praising God, singing:

***Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.***

Glorify God because **GOD IS OUR SAVIOR**.

That's what counts. Amen.