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The Magnificat

Luke 1.39-55

Series: Songs of the Incarnation

November 28, 2021

The Village Church at Shell Point

I. The Significance of Song

- A. It was one of the most dismal periods in the history of Israel
 - 1. The period of the Judges
 - 2. Having entered the Promised Land victoriously under Joshua several generations earlier, Israel had disintegrated into a loose confederation of tribes
 - 3. Their moral disintegration, their dabbling in the local idolatries, led them to be overrun and dominated by the surrounding Canaanite tribes
 - a. During the roughly 400 years of this period, Israel was loosely led by judges
 - 4. And in one particular period, the judge was a woman
 - a. A woman named Deborah
 - 5. God had given over Israel to domination by the Canaanite king Jabin, whose commander of the army was Sisera
 - a. Sisera had at his command 900 iron chariots
 - b. A technological and industrial military advantage that Israel had yet to master
 - 6. Deborah called on Barak to muster an army from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali – an area in the north of Israel where Galilee was located
 - a. Turns out Barak was kind of a wimp
 - b. He tells Deborah he would do it if she would go with him!
 - c. Deborah then prophesies that deliverance would come, not from a man but from a woman
 - 7. Long story short – Israel’s army has Sisera on the run
 - a. He escapes to a semi-nomadic family of Kenites
 - b. Ends up getting shelter in the tent of a woman names Jael
 - c. Who gives him some milk to drink
 - d. Puts him to sleep
 - e. And while he’s sleeping, she drives a tent peg through his brain
 - f. Eventually, Barak shows up; Jael delivers the body of Sisera to him
- B. So, what do they do now?
 - 1. **They sing!**
 - a. **Judges 5:3** (NASB95) — 3 “Hear, O kings; give ear, O rulers! I—to the LORD, I will sing, I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

2. **The Magnificat – Mary’s song**
 - a. Magnificat – Latin for the opening phrase
 - b. “My soul magnifies the Lord”
 3. **The Benedictus – Zacharias’s song**
 - a. Zacharias – John the Baptist’s father, Elizabeth’s husband
 - b. Zacharias – who was visited by the Angel of the Lord while engaged in his temple service – and told that his wife Elizabeth would deliver a child in her advanced years
 - c. Because he didn’t believe what the angel had told him, he was struck dumb until the baby was born
 - d. And when he named the baby John, his tongue was loosed
 - e. And his first expression was to sing
 - f. Benedictus – Latin for the first word of his song: “Blessed” be the Lord God of Israel
 4. **The Gloria in Excelsis Deo – the Angels’ song**
 - a. Sung to the shepherds
 - b. Latin for the first words of that song: “Glory to God in the highest”
 5. **The Nunc Dimittis – Simeon’s song**
 - a. Simeon – the aged man in the temple longing for the consolation of Israel, the coming of Messiah
 - b. The Holy Spirit had told him he would not die until he had seen the Christ
 - c. When Jesus was presented in the temple for dedication – Simeon recognized that Messiah had come
 - d. So he too erupts in song
 - e. Nunc dimittis – Latin for the first portion of the song: “Now dismiss your servant”
 - f. The Christ has come; Simeon is free to die!
- I. That is Luke’s incarnation hymnal
1. It is also the outline for this Advent series these four Sundays: Songs of the Incarnation
- J. And we begin with **Mary’s song – the Magnificat**
1. It is evoked by a visitation by the angel Gabriel
 2. **Luke 1:30–33** (NASB95) — 30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”
 3. Mary wonders, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”
 4. **Luke 1:35** (NASB95) — 35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

5. The angel also tells Mary that her cousin Elizabeth is with child in her old age
6. So Mary leaves Nazareth and goes all the way to Judah to see Elizabeth
 - a. And when she arrives Elizabeth verifies what the angel has told her
7. So Mary sings!

II. **The Personal Advent**

- A. The first thing we notice about it is how personal it is
- B. **Luke 1:46–47** (NASB95) —
 1. 46 And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord,
 2. 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”
- C. Mary veritably explodes in worship
 1. Which you can’t do in mere prose – or even in poetry
 - a. Music must carry the text
 - b. So Mary sings!
- D. Mary’s inner being – her soul, her spirit – cannot be contained
 1. The message itself – personal as it is to her – burns in her heart, in the inner core of her being
 - a. And she has to let it out!
 2. She magnifies the Lord – she makes much of God
 - a. She exalts God in her estimation – the very epitome of worship
 3. She rejoices in God – not just that she praises God, but that the very delight of her life is in the praising of God
 4. Jonathan Edwards: God is glorified not only by His glory’s being seen, but by its being rejoiced in... He that testifies his idea of God’s glory doesn’t glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.
 5. That’s Mary: “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior”
- E. Mary worships – this is what she was made to do!
 1. She is consumed with this expression of praise!
- F. What is it in your life experience with Jesus that has resulted in a worship explosion?
 1. What has God done for you, that when you consider it, leads your heart to nearly burst at the seams and explode in glorious praise and adoration?
 - a. Have you ever had that kind of encounter with Jesus?
 2. That was Mary’s experience – surely unique in the course of redemptive history
 - a. But while our experience would never be Mary’s, has not God done great things for us?
 - b. Great things that if we thought about them for 5 minutes would lead our hearts to explode?
- G. After Mary explodes in worship, she turns in a remarkable way to her own **self-awareness**

1. It's an ironic spiritual principle that when we encounter God in the way Mary encounters Him, that we then have a revelation of ourselves in a way that we have not usually been aware
 - a. It's as if the light of God has shown in the darkest recesses of our souls, revealing things that we have hidden from ourselves and from everyone else
 2. **Luke 1:46–48** (NASB95) — 46 And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 “For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.”
- H. First, in being the recipient of God's astonishing grace and mercy, she recognizes **her sinfulness**
1. “My spirit rejoices in God – my Savior!”
 2. Mary has a Savior!
 - a. What would she have been saved from?
 - b. She has been saved from the very same thing we have been saved from
 - c. She would be saved by God from sin and its consequences!
 3. You might think that, having received the special electing favor of God as delivered to her by Gabriel, she might have taken that to mean that she was somehow deserving of God's favor
 - a. Nothing could be further from the truth
 - b. God's electing Mary for her special redemptive role has nothing to do with any kind of inherent righteousness in her
 - c. It has to do with God's grace – for her and for His people who will come to be redeemed by the life, death and resurrection of the child she will bear
 4. In that one phrase – “in God my Savior” – she affirms the central truths of her sinfulness and of God's grace
- I. The second aspect of her self-awareness is of **her humility**
1. “He has had regard for humble state of His bondservant” (**Luke 1.48**)
 2. She has recognized that, in the world's estimation, she is about as insignificant as one can get
 - a. She is betrothed to a lowly carpenter
 - b. From Nazareth, an obscure backwater town in an out of the way province called Galilee
 - c. She's only a teenager
 - d. On no one's radar screen in terms of royal succession (though she rightfully could have been)
 3. She is a nobody from the world's perspective
 4. Yet God chooses her to be the instrument of the redemption of the human race!
 - a. What incredible mercy! What inconceivable grace
 5. But for Mary, it highlights her lowliness
- J. When you received the grace of God, did you understand your humble estate?

1. Did you realize that apart from the grace of God, you were far removed from God and His splendor and glory?
 2. Do you realize that when God comes to you and offers salvation to you through Jesus Christ, He is condescending to traverse the greatest spiritual and moral distance imaginable and comes and save you!
 3. A genuine encounter with God will produce a self-awareness that God has spanned that great distance to come to you!
 - a. Mary: “Why me? I’m just a poor teenage girl from nowhere. A sinner by nature?”
 - b. Do you have that same sense of awareness about yourself?
- K. And when Mary realizes the historical significance of what is about to happen to her
1. She realizes that she will go **from inconsequentiality to significance**
 2. “For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.”
 - a. There will be people until the end of time who will know of this Mary
 - b. Who will recognize her role in what God has done in bringing the Son of God to birth
 - c. Who will, in fact, repeat, even sing, this song that Mary has written
- L. All of this leads to **Mary’s God-awareness**
1. **Luke 1:49** (NASB95) — 49 “For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.”
 2. She calls attention to the power of God
 - a. The sense that I think is best to understand this is to see the contrast between God and herself
 - b. **“... the Mighty One has done great things for me”**
 - c. The most powerful Being in the universe has exercised His might on behalf of the weakest of all humans – me!
- M. Do your realize that in the incarnation of the Son, in the birth of Jesus, God has unleashed His mighty power on behalf of us inconsequential, weak, impotent creatures?
1. That’s astonishing to Mary
 - a. It is astonishing to you?
 - b. Does it affect you like it does her?
- N. And then, she not only recognizes the power of God, she recognizes His moral character – **His holiness**
1. “And holy is His name”
 2. And this is not just His moral righteousness
 - a. It is about His “otherness” – that’s the true meaning of the Holy
 3. God is not just a human being like us – only better
 - a. No! He a different order of Being altogether
 - b. No other Being in the universe has the capacity, the inclination, the desire, the wisdom, the love, and the compassion to save a people for Himself
 - c. A people from every tribe, tongue and nation

- d. Through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God incarnate
 - e. Who would come to this earth through the humble womb of this Nazarene teenager
- O. This is Mary's personal expression of worship
- 1. Her personal Advent

III. **The Merciful Advent**

- A. **Luke 1:50** (NASB95) — 50 “AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.
- B. Now what would a young, Jewish girl understand by the idea of mercy
- 1. First, mercy is **the love of a superior for an inferior**
 - a. Mary has already recognized the amazing condescension of God for an insignificant Jewish teenager from Nazareth
 - b. “The Mighty One has done great things for me!”
 - 2. It includes the idea of compassion
 - a. The superior feels something for the plight of the inferior
 - 3. And second, biblical mercy is the response of a person who is **able to help someone who is in need**
 - a. The One who is mighty is surely able to help poor, insignificant teenagers
 - 4. In both cases, the assumption is that the person to be helped has no right to expect assistance
- C. Mary understands that God Almighty – the superior One – looks down on the decrepit condition of humankind
- 1. And with deep feeling and compassion, with steadfast love, He acts
 - a. By sending His own Son in the form of human nature
 - b. To do for us what we could never do for ourselves
 - c. To redeem us from the penalty and power of sin in which we are bound
 - d. To free us to become a people for Himself
 - e. To be the people God intended for those created in His image
- D. Mary knew that the child she would bear would be the instrument of mercy
- 1. This was Mary's merciful Advent

IV. **The Upside-Down Advent**

- A. Mary then recognizes the upside-down nature of Advent
- 1. **Luke 1:51–53** (NASB95) —
 - a. 51 “He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.
 - b. 52 “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.
 - c. 53 “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed.
- B. Integral to these three verses is a stark contrast

1. A contrast between two groups of people
 2. The proud... the rulers... the rich
 - a. Contrasted with the humble and the hungry
 3. Mary is thinking of two groups of people
 - a. The rulers – the proud, the mighty, the influential, the powerful, the rich
 - b. V. The children of God – lowly, poor, disenfranchised
- C. **1 Corinthians 1:26–29** (NASB95) —
1. 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
 2. 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
 3. 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
 4. 29 so that no man may boast before God.
- D. This is the upside- down God
1. And Advent is the poster child for the upside-down God
 - a. The coming of Christ turns the world upside-down
 2. The haves become the have-nots
 - a. The have-nots become the haves
- E. All of which is making me nervous
1. Face it – we live in a community of haves, by and large
 - a. A community of successful people
 - b. A people of influence and significance
 2. It's easy to preach to people who are the humble and the hungry
 - a. There is great hope in passages like these for the humble and the hungry
 3. It's quite another thing to preach to the proud, the powerful, and the wealthy
 - a. Passages like this are fraught with warning
- F. Nevertheless, Advent is about the upside-down God
1. The coming of Christ will turn our world upside-down
 - a. Our personal world
 2. The question is, which way will it turn?
- G. God's arm is against one group of people – the proud, the powerful, the rich
1. The threat comes first against the proud
 - a. "He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart"
 2. Like Babel – when the unified human race, in pride, erected a magnificent structure, a tower, reaching to the heavens, as a testimony to their greatness
 3. Only to be scattered, their languages confused, over the face of the earth
- H. But God's judgment on the proud is not an external judgment, a scattering of people

1. With the coming of Christ, it is the scattering of their thoughts, their imaginations – in the very core of their being
 2. It is an internal confusion that afflicts proud humanity
 3. An intellectual and psychological disintegration
 4. How characteristic of our age!
 5. God's arm – His strength – is against the proud
- I. Second, God's arm – His strength – is against the abusers of power
1. There will always be people in power
 - a. Some, like David, are not proud but humble – a man after God's own heart
 - b. But others use their power for their own glory
 - c. And exercise it at the expense of their subjects – who abuse their power
 2. They are the special objects of God's judgment
 - a. **Luke 1:52** (NASB95) — 52 “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.”
- J. Third, God's arm, His strength, is against the oppressive rich
1. Again, there will always be the wealthy who are godly
 - a. But so many have made their wealth at the expense of the poor
 - b. And many more without thought that their wealth is meant to be used for the welfare of the needy
 2. **Luke 1:53** (NASB95) — 53 “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed.”
 - a. God is against the oppressive rich
 3. God's arm – His strength – is employed against the rulers of Mary's day
 - a. Who, in their pride, used their positions of power and influence to advance themselves
 - b. Used their riches to pad their own lifestyles without a thought of the multitude of people who are struggling merely to eke out an existence
 4. The upside-down God will turn those tables
 - a. The proud will be brought low like the beasts
 - b. The powerful will be rejected from their thrones
 - c. The rich will be hungry
- K. But God's arm – His strength
1. The same arm that strikes the proud, abusive rulers
 - a. Will be the same arm that lifts the oppressed
 2. **Luke 1:52** (NASB95) — 52 “... And has exalted those who were humble.”
 3. Like the arm of the shepherd lifting a wounded sheep
 - a. God will lift the humble
 4. The humble – those who take no credit for whatever good fortune they may have received
 5. The humble – those who have cast their lives on the mercy of God alone
 6. The humble – those who know that their salvation depends, not on themselves, but on the grace of God

- L. The arm of God will feed the hungry
1. **Luke 1:53** (NASB95) — 53 “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS...”
 2. Mary will recognize that the coming of Christ will literally feed people
 - a. As the feeding of the 5,000 made clear (John 6)
 3. Spiritual hunger is also the focus of the coming of Christ
 - a. **Matthew 5:6** (NASB95) — 6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”
 - b. **John 7:37–38** (NASB95) — 37 ... “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ”
 4. The power of God, the strength of God, the arm of God – is alone capable of feeding the hungry, satisfying the thirsty, refreshing the souls of genuine seekers
- M. Is God for you or against you?
1. The Advent, the incarnation, of the Son of God – reveals the upside-down God to us
 - a. And in fact, Christ has done just that in our world
 - b. Where the Christ of the Bible has been proclaimed and believed on, there the proud, the abusers of power, and the oppressive rich have been dethroned and set aside
 - c. Where the Christ of the Bible has been proclaimed and believed on, there the humble have assumed leadership and influence, and the hungry, physically and spiritually, have been fed
 2. So whose are you?

V. **The Promise of Advent**

- A. Finally, Mary exults in the promise of Advent
1. **Luke 1:54–55** (NASB95) — 54 “He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”
- B. Mary is saying, “This event, this amazing, gracious giving of Your Son, O God – is all in response to Your establishing a relationship with our ancestor Abraham”
1. A relationship that was birthed in a land far away – in Mesopotamia
 - a. 2,000 years before
 - b. Before Mary’s time
 - c. 4,000 years before our time
 2. That God had a plan
 - a. A plan – not just a five year plan, or a 10 year plan, or a 50 or a 100 year plan
 - b. But a 2 millennia plan
 - c. A plan that He was faithful to execute
 - d. In ways that involved His acting mercifully on behalf of His people
 - e. Over and over again, century by century
 3. What incredible faithfulness!

- C. This is all about a covenant
 - 1. A covenant between God and His people
 - a. A covenant of grace
 - 2. Grace – because there was nothing in Abraham – the sun worshiper! – which would have made him worthy of God’s slightest attention
 - a. Abraham was the recipient of God’s special favor without any merit on his part
 - b. And ever since Adam sinned, God’s covenant relationships have always been a covenant of grace
 - c. Indeed, even in Adam’s sin – God promised a redeemer
 - d. Genesis 3:15 (NASB95) — 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”
 - 3. The seed, the offspring of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent
 - a. Protoeuangelion – the first gospel
 - 4. The history of the OT is about God’s perpetuating of the seed
 - a. Through the line of Seth – the child born to Adam and Eve following Able’s murder
 - b. Through the descendants of Noah
 - c. Through the line of Shem – one of the sons of Noah
 - d. Through Eber – Shem’s great-grandson
 - e. Whose descendant was Abraham
- D. The story of NT is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham
 - 1. Galatians 3:16 (NASB95) — 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.
- E. That’s why Mary could sing
 - 1. Luke 1:55 (NASB95) — 55 “As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

VI. Conclusion

- A. Remarkable to remember how all of this started
 - 1. Mary visited Elizabeth
 - a. Who would give birth to John the Baptist
 - 2. And when Mary and Elizabeth met
 - a. So did John and Jesus!
 - b. In the womb!
 - 3. The baby in Elizabeth’s womb – John – leaped in the presence of the first trimester Jesus!
 - a. As the last prophet of the OC would meet the fulfillment of the OC
 - b. The author of the NC
- B. Mary exploded in worship
 - 1. Luke 1:46–47 (NASB95) — 46 And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”
- C. Even the babies exploded in worship!

1. Do you have the good sense to explode in worship?
2. Then you must sing!
 - a. Sing the songs of the incarnation!