

Luke 1:39–56 (ESV)

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

- 51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of
their hearts;
- 52 he has brought down the mighty from their
thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
- 53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
- 54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
- 55 as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."
- 56 And Mary remained with her about three months
and returned to her home.

Christmas is a time of joy, and it's a time for praising God....
and there's plenty of joy and plenty of praising God in the
Christmas story...

I've been a pastor now for 16 years, and each Christmas, I try
to find a different part of the Christmas story for us to focus
on. And when it comes to joy and the praise of God, it's
pretty common to focus on:

- the angels coming to the shepherds;
- wise men bringing their gifts;
- message of the angels to Mary and Joseph...

But there's also another wonderful song of praise to God, that
we (at least "we" in the protestant tradition) rarely venture
into.

And that's the song of praise that Mary sang to the Lord...

It's known as "The Magnificat", because she begins: "**My
soul magnifies the Lord,**
That means "my soul" (myself – who I am), makes God
great...

That might seem like a bit of a strange phrase – that "**I** make
God great", because God's already great. But this, is the
power of praise, and the power of worship... And it's not just
a matter of words – it's when our souls (the essence of who
we are), worships God before men,, And when that happens,
others can begin to **also** grasp the greatness and the bigness of
God (as we know Him)...

It's not that we make God any bigger than He already is – our worship, draws the attention of those who **don't** yet know God, to the greatness of God...

e.g.

There's been a few famous people die this year... And something I've noticed, is when somebody famous dies, some of these people you'd be familiar with their achievements – others, not so much... But when somebody 'great' dies, the news (or sometimes there might be a special show on tv for them), but it'll be a segment that tells us all about the 'great' things that this person's done... And there's been times when I've seen a segment like this, and I've heard things, and gone "Wow!, I admire this person – I didn't know that they had done that" ...

And it's the same, when we worship **God**, and when we praise **God** for the great things that **He's** done... Others might go "Wow! I've never considered that God is responsible for that." And so, we make God great – not by embellishing anything, but by merely praising God for what He's done...

And this is why we're meeting here today – we magnify God today (as we worship Him), because He sent His Son...

And Mary goes on: ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

Alright, so her soul (her very self) magnifies God, and her spirit rejoices in God. This is the very heart of the Christmas message... Jesus isn't just a baby who was born and lain in a feed trough – Jesus is God our saviour...

And if you're someone who's experienced the salvation of God through Jesus Christ, you understand very well, what it means for your spirit to rejoice... I reckon this is the difference between a Christian celebrating Christmas, and anybody else celebrating Christmas...

If your spirit doesn't rejoice at Christmas, it might be because you don't know Jesus as your saviour...

Different people celebrate different things at Christmas... They have different ideas of what Christmas is about. *You see, if we watch the Christmas movies on tv, what impression do they give us about the joy of Christmas???*

- *Families having good times together;*
- *A nasty person finally doing something good for somebody else;*
- *Somebody lonely finding somebody else to share Christmas with;*
- *Something as shallow as "Getting home in time for Christmas dinner";*
- *Falling in love;*

But you see, all of that stuff — that's just a side-show.

Christmas is a time for our **Spirit** to rejoice... And why would our Spirit rejoice??? It's because we know our Saviour has come...

This is no little thing that Jesus saved us from... Jesus has saved us from spiritual death. In Christ, we have eternal

life... And that's why our Spirit rejoices... If Jesus didn't come; born; die on the cross for us, we'd be doomed...

But He's taken us from our state of utter hopelessness, and established us in a position of great esteem...

What an amazing thing – that Jesus would leave Heaven, to come to earth, to suffer and die, to save 'lowly us'...

And in this, our Spirit rejoices... and yet, for many people, they don't care... Christmas is more of a time to get drunk,, and their spirit has no joy...

Most people can find some kind of joy at Christmas, but do their Spirits rejoice?

There's a great big hurdle they haven't gotten over, and it's keeping them from coming to a saving faith in Jesus...

Do you know what the hurdle is??? Most often, it's pride...

The one thing that really sticks-out to me (in this song of praise), is the way that Mary was intensely aware of her lowliness – and why would she be considered worthy to carry the Son of God; to raise the Son of God???

She uses the phrase that she's of humble estate... And she was. In the eyes of the world, Mary was a nobody. She wasn't:

- wealthy;
- high-born;
- come from upper classes / middle classes;

- famous;
- Facebook friends / twitter following

And now, pregnant out of wedlock,, she was shamed...

And yet, all generations, from then on, would call her blessed...

You see, Jesus didn't come for the mighty or the proud...
Jesus came for the humble. And perhaps the greatest barrier for any of us to be saved, is when we have an attitude of pride and self-sufficiency...

- The rich get by quite nicely without crying out to God, and so they don't feel they need Him;
- The strong like to do things themselves, and so their self-sufficiency stops them from crying out to God;
- The proud like to do things their own way, and so they don't cry out to God...

But V⁵⁰ ... his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

You see, this has always been true. And it always will be true – that God's mercy is for those who fear him...

“The Proud” don't fear God, but God demonstrates His strength, when He scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

That's where Pride begins – in the heart...

Pride is a very seductive thing... And often, we don't realise we're proud in a bad way... We tend to think that the proud are those who go: "*I'm just wonderful*"... But biblically, the proud are those who reject God – they go their own way, in all self-sufficiency, and in their mind, they make their own plans...

But in the end, it's the humble who are exalted. You see, it's the humble who fear God, and so it's the humble that He lifts up...

Jesus has a way of turning everything on its head... The mighty up there on their thrones, are brought down, while the humble are lifted up...

The rich who don't turn to God, are sent away empty, while those who didn't even have enough to eat, are filled with good things...

He turns everything on its head...

This is what Christmas is about...

This is why families who can't afford to buy any Christmas presents can be filled with an immense joy at Christmas, because they

- celebrate;
- worship;
- magnify God,

because He has given us His son...

What an amazing experience it was for Mary – for this humble woman, to carry the Son of God...

Do you realise, we have a similar privilege??? Jesus now dwells in the hearts of His disciples... What a privilege it is for us, that God chooses to live in the humble...

His mercy is for those who fear Him, and part of the mercy of God, is He is with us every day...

So this Christmas, let's praise God – Let's Magnify the Lord, for this very thing... That Jesus came to save.