

Advent Sermon Series: Songs for the Savior - The Song of Mary

Luke 1:46-55. ⁴⁶ Then Mary said, My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ because he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, ⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.

Made ready by the promises...

We humbly watch for the coming of the Lord.

We gratefully proclaim the mercy of our God

She was waiting for the promised Messiah. She was waiting like many others were and then the angel suddenly came to her, came to her without warning, and yet she was ready. She was watching for the salvation that God had promised. She was watching for the Savior and she knew by faith that God would deliver. And so, when the angel spoke to Mary, it was certainly a case of shock but not disbelief. She received the news in faith. This sounded impossible, but this was going to happen. This sounded so beyond the ordinary, but the Mighty One (or more literally, the One who is able) would bring this about by his power, by his will. This was the promise that had been given, that had been repeated and passed down. And now it just so happened that God had chosen her. She would bear the child who would be the Savior of the world. And so stunned, and humbled that God would pick her, she believed the words of the angel. Hers was a faith built on the promises of God. She knew she was nothing but a sinner who needed a merciful God. She knew that she was a sinner who needed a Savior, and so she was just so grateful that God would include her in this promise. In this moment of profound gratitude, she thanked her Lord that he had blessed *her* - of all people he had honored her - with such a wonderful promise. Mary praised her Lord. With this song she proclaimed the goodness of her God, and she went about her days in eager anticipation of the fulfillment of this wonderful promise. The holy one who has the power to cast down ruler from their thrones, in mercy lifts up the humble. He blesses those who in faith look to God. In this case he reached out to fulfill his promise to this humble and ordinary woman, and because of the power of his promises she was ready.

With the season of Advent, we might typically think of preparing for Christmas. We think of getting ready and counting down the days to that special day. But during Advent we also consider how Christ comes to us in word and Sacrament and how we are waiting for Christ to come again in all his glory. The theme for the first week of Advent is Watch! Be ready!

This year as we observe Advent we will observe a special sermon series called: Songs for the Savior. These are typically songs connected to the Christmas story, but they also help us prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ through Word and Sacrament. The Song of Mary that we look at today or the Magnificat in a way prepares also prepares us as we wait for Christ's second coming.

Consider how God came to Mary and those who waited for the promised Messiah in those days. For thousands of years God spoke words of promise to generation, after generation, from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, down through the people of Israel. He promised a Savior, the coming Messiah, and in his kindness, he would give details to renew the promise, to assure, to prepare his people, and to build up their faith as they waited for the promise to be fulfilled. God came to them through his Word spoken through Scripture and through the prophets to strengthen and sustain their faith. Isaiah's words of virgin and a child would be fulfilled. Other promises were given. Micah spoke of his birth, which would take place in Bethlehem. Malachi spoke of his coming as the judge at the end of time. But then no more prophets came because the people were disobedient, and many refused to listen. And so, for 400 years God's faithful people would have to wait, without even a prophet to guide them, to alert them, to get them ready. And yet when God's comes to Mary we see that that by the gift of faith, by the power of the promise, she is watching, and waiting, and when the announcement of the Savior comes to her, Mary is ready. She knows what her God has done in the past. She knows of his mighty deeds as passed down to her through the Word. And so, she embraces this impossible news with faith because it comes from God, it comes from his messenger, it comes in line and fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. In fact, after receiving the news, after Mary hurries to Zachariah's home, Elizabeth, her relative, includes this remark in her greeting: ⁴⁵ ***Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!***"

Rightfully we marvel at the fulfillment of this wonderful promise. Yearly we recall the Christmas story and we celebrate the gift of a Savior. But this season of the church year is not only reserved for getting ready for our Savior's first coming, but it is very much a time when we look forward to the second coming of Christ. We rejoice in the promises fulfilled and that ought to make us all the more eager as we look ahead for promises yet to be fulfilled. In a way we find ourselves in a position like Mary. Standing on promises fulfilled we are looking ahead in faith. For 2000 years we have been given the promises. Jesus came in fulfillment of the promises. God has spoken to us by through prophets, apostles, and our Savior himself. And in his Word we are given details to assure us that our Christ will come again. We are given signs to make us ready and to keep us alert. Our Lord has given us promises, prophecies, pictures of heaven, visions describing the return of Christ in detail, and how we will be lifted up to be with him, exalted and there with the Lord of all, for all time. What marvelous, incredible promises the Lord gives to us! And God is faithful and keeps all his promises. Christ will come in all his glory. He will come to judge the living and the dead. Those who reject his word and warnings of judgment will be shut out from this glorious celebration, but those who believe will enjoy the joy and peace of heaven for all time. One day he will come, but we are not told when. He will come for us who are waiting, who by his gift of faith, trust in the promises of God, and through those we are made ready for that day of great celebration. We are made ready by the promises. We are made ready by the promises.

Giving thanks for promises fulfilled we look forward in faith, with certain and joyful expectation as we await Christ's return.

Made ready by the promises...We humbly watch for the coming of the Lord. We gratefully proclaim the mercy of our God

One of the most memorable details of this song of Mary is how God granted Mary such a faith that responds in such a humble and personal way. Who was she that God would include this unknown, undeserving servant in his plan of salvation? This was the promise that had been passed down from Abraham. This was the plan of salvation that would be passed down from generation to generation to the end of time. With humble, exuberant faith, she proclaims a personal gratitude for this gift of salvation who would come this child born to her. With a reflective faith, she meditates on what this all means, and confesses her amazement that she is part of all of this. That God had chosen her. That God has included her. ***"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.***

The promise of the Savior is the message that has been passed down through generations, but how can we not stand in awe of the personal aspect to all of this. As we take in these days of Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, this is more than a historical recalling of a story that happened long ago. This is the good news of *my* salvation. This is the good news of *your* Savior coming from heaven down to earth for you, and he came the first time, so that you might meet him with joy when he comes again. Through his promises he reveals to you, he assures you and me that we are included, that we are called to be his own. He has sent his word to show me my sin and to show me my Savior. You and I are ordinary sinners. We are beggars before God with nothing to offer him that he should help us. After all there is no fame or fortune big enough, no spiritual pedigree or resume impressive enough, that you or I could ever hope to present to God that win his favor. God's Word expresses and confirms what we know by experience; we are terribly imperfect and we have no right to stand before a holy, perfect, God on our own. But we praise God for his mercy that he extends to you and me. We stand in awe and holy reverence of God as he tells us in his word that not only does Jesus come born of the virgin Mary, but the Word made flesh came to this world *for you and for me*. This is not just some remarkable, unforgettable story, but this is the account of *my* salvation, of *your* eternal redemption. Your sins are paid for in Christ who comes as your Redeemer, Mary's Savior, my LORD. Jesus comes born of woman, born under the law to give me his righteousness. And your Lord and my Savior will come again to bring us to heaven. We wait, we watch, we prepare with eager hearts, and lives devoted to him, with a faith that clings both to these promises fulfilled and those yet to be fulfilled.

Christ will come again and we trust in this marvelous Word. Christ will come again to take us to be with him. Even though this seems so beyond the ordinary, this is what God promises. Even though this seems so beyond what you and I deserve, God extends his mercy to you and me. He calls each one of us to faith. He comes to us through Word and Sacrament. In the gift of baptism, he puts his name on you, on me. In his kindness He speaks his word into my ears and yours. In his grace and power, he speaks his word into our hearts as he works and strengthens faith. And with an profound touch of assurance he places his sacred meal on our lips, his body and blood with the bread and the wine, to assure us that our sins

our forgiven and that all his promises are true. He strengthens and keeps us in the true faith unto life everlasting as he comes to us through Word and Sacrament.

And then one day as promised Jesus, the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, will come again, and we are blessed by faith, we are confident and sure that he will take us to heaven to be with him. He is mindful of the humble state of his servants. The mighty one, the one who is able to rescue us from sin and death and hell, the one who is able to give us the gift of heaven, will come as promised, he will come down on the clouds, and bring us to eternal glory. He lifts up the lowly but those who are prideful in their unbelief, those who look to themselves or their wealth or their earthly status for salvation will be brought down, those who paid no attention to these saving promise will be cast down and away from his presence. He will come at any time just as promised. And by God's grace, because he came to us through Word and Sacrament, we believe, we are ready.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. Day after day, as we consider what great things he has done for us, we will gratefully proclaim the mercy, the love, the goodness of the LORD.

This can be a very busy time of the year. This can also be a very repetitive time of year. The same story. The same songs and carols. Even during this festive time of year, we can be lulled into a spiritual malaise as we sleep walk through another Christmas season, as we wrap up another year, as we live out another day. But take a moment to meditate on what this means to you and me. God has taken unworthy sinners and he has included us in his story of salvation. He has called us to be his own. The mighty one has not only done great things, but he has done these great things *for you and for me*. As we hear the song of Mary, as we hear this song sung for the Savior, we are prepared and made ready not only for the first coming of our Savior, but for the day when our Savior will come again.

We are waiting just like thousands of others. We are waiting for these promises to be fulfilled. We do not know the day or hour, but as we wait we are made ready by the promises. God is good and kind and faithful. He kept the promise to send the child born of Mary. He kept his promise to be the Lamb of God, the sacrifice that saves you and me. He kept his promise to rise again, to ascend to heaven. He is keeping his promise to rule over all things. And we, therefore, know that he will keep his promise to come again. In his kindness he helps us, and prepares us, comforts, and assures us, as he comes to us through Word and Sacrament. He comes to us and we are made ready by the promises so that we can greet his return with joy. He makes us ready so that meet him with faith and peace when he calls us home. With a humble and grateful faith our Lord prepares us, makes us ready. Yes, we can be sure. We can be certain. He who brings rulers down from their thrones, who will judge and cast away those who are arrogant in their opinion of themselves before God, he will lift his lowly children up to himself in heavenly glory. He does this because he is great in his kindness and power and mercy. My soul proclaims the greatness of my God, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Amen.

Take a moment to meditate on this Song for the Savior.

If you are able listen to the song: "Magnificat" as performed by the church band Koine`

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lfNiQP43H8>