

## “MARY’S SONG -*MAGNIFICAT*”

Luke 1:46-55

Christmas is a time of music. Unfortunately, most of the music we hear at Christmas time on the radio, television, and in the shopping centers has no mention of Christ’s birth. It is about holly and mistletoe, sleigh bells and snow, Santa Claus, Rudolph, Frosty the Snowman, the Twelve Days of Christmas, Christmas cookies, and fruitcake. I heard this week that the New York City Transit System refused to allow an ad sized poster showing three camels and a night sky. There were no words. The Catholic Archdiocese was willing to pay regular rates for ad.

The stores have removed all references to Jesus’ birth. Christmas has been lumped together with Kwanza, Hanukkah, and Winter Solstice into Happy Holidays and Season’s Greetings.

One year in El Dorado there was a unique tree lighting ceremony. Local artists each wrote a poem for the Christmas season. As each poem was completed one color of the lights was switched on. After all the poems were read, the lights were all illuminated.

Mary, inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, wrote a poem about what God was doing in her life. The poem is called *Magnificat* because that is the first word of the poem in Latin. Her poem has been set to music by more composers than any other poem.

*Magnificat* is one of four poems found in the Gospel accounts of Christ’s birth. They are the original Christmas songs. The others are *Benedictus*, *Annunciatio Angeli*, and *Nunc Dimittis*. *Magnificat* is a beautiful example of Greek poetry. How did this young woman have such a grasp of Old Testament Scripture and such literary skill?

1.) And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. (Luke 1:46-48 NKJV)

The first line of Mary's poem is very close in meaning to the answer to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism – "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Mary magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God. If it is our chief purpose in life to glorify God and enjoy Him, that must mean more than coming to church for one hour a week. If people enjoyed God and desired to glorify Him would church attendance be dwindling until many churches are closing; would Sunday Schools, evening services, midweek services be disappearing? If a farmer gave no more attention and work to his fields than we do to glorifying God, would there be any food?

In the second line we see the humility and thankfulness of Mary. She was a prodigy; she was a virgin; she had been chosen by God from all the young women in Israel to give birth to the Messiah. All of these were reasons for pride, but Mary was humble. She regarded herself as on a par with a maidservant. God loves persons who are lowly in heart.

Jesus said that if you are invited to a dinner not to take the highest seat lest the host ask you to move down for a more honored guest. Jesus said to take a low seat and you will be honored when the host says, "Friend, move up higher." Mary considered herself as a lowly servant. God exalted her to the place He thinks she deserves: "henceforth all generations will call me blessed."

I have read about statues of Mary weeping. If anything could make Mary weep, it is when people pray to her and glorify her instead of praying to Jesus and exalting Him.

2.) For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. (Luke 1:49-50 NKJV)  
Mary had much to fear. How would Joseph, her family, and the people of the town react when it became known that she was pregnant? Her family could put her out of the house and have her publicly stoned. Joseph could break their engagement. How could she support herself and a child? Could she even stay in town as an unmarried mother?

Instead of worrying, Mary praises God. The Bible tells us to give thanks in every circumstance. We can praise God and say He who is mighty has done great things for me. when we have a job, or pray for a job and get one, or pray for healing and we become well. The test of faith and love for God is when we can praise God He who is mighty has done great things for me. when we lose our job, or don't get a job, or don't get well.

Mary continues her praise And holy is His name. The Shorter Catechism says that God is "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable" in His holiness. That God is holy means that He is not like anything else. He is not like anything created, not like any creature. There is no other God but Him. Therefore, as those who were created by Him, we should humble ourselves before Him, obey Him in everything, and believe that He knows what is best for us.

Job demonstrated that humble faith and obedience when he said, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Mary obeyed God in a difficult and yet exalted assignment – be the mother of God's holy Child. She would still be a virgin, but few would believe that. Mary taught her son Jesus to humbly obey God in the most difficult circumstances. That is how He could pray, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

3.) And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. (Luke 1:50-53 NKJV)

Mary extends her praise of God beyond what He has done for her to what He has done and is doing for all mankind. She tells of His love and mercy for those who fear Him. Mary is not using the word "fear" in the sense an abused wife or child or people oppressed by a brutal dictatorship would use the word. Instead it is the fear of reverence and love for a kind and virtuous Father whom we fear that we would hurt or dishonor if our conduct was such that He would disapprove. This is the fear of the LORD that leads to knowledge.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. (Psalms 111:10 NKJV)

No matter how diligently we try to keep God's commandments, no matter how earnestly we fear and love Him, we will sin. His mercy is on us from one generation to another.

The mercy God shows to those who love Him, fear Him, and believe in Him extends to the causes of their misery – the wicked who oppress them. God shows mercy to the righteous by judging the wicked. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones,

God has promised to turn the world upside down when Jesus comes back to set up His kingdom. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

In Matthew 5, Jesus expands on these concepts of God's mercy and justice in the Beatitudes and His teaching the Ten Commandments.