Mary's Song

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[0:00] Well, we start an Advent series today on Christmas songs, songs from the Bible about Christmas. And the first one is the one we just read, Mary's song.

We read it, we sang it earlier, and the message of Christmas is right in the heart of it. And the question today is, what is it that makes Mary sing?
And you can see it right in verse 49, she says, the mighty one has done great things for me. And so she says, I'm singing today because he has done great things for me.
And so we need to ask the question, what has God done for Mary? What did he do for her? And what is it that makes her sing? And so three things, God humbled the exalted, sorry, God exalted the humble woman.
God exalted the humble woman, he fulfilled the Old Testament in her. And thirdly, he put a song in her heart. So he exalted the humble woman, he fulfilled the Old Testament in her, and he put a song into her heart.
[1:10] So let's look at that. Why does Mary sing? The first reason is because he exalted the humble woman. Now she says this, she says exactly that.

You see in verse 48 and 52, she says, God looked on my humble estate, and then in 52, and he has exalted my humble estate.
So she says, God looked at my humble position in life, and he made much of me, God, he did it. And she says it twice in this song. Now what she's talking about here is the story.
The angel Gabriel had come to two women, not just Mary, but also to Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. And he had said to Elizabeth, you're going to have a baby miraculously in your old age, and he's going to be the forerunner of Mary's baby, your cousin's baby.
And the angel goes to Elizabeth, and he goes to Gabriel, Gabriel goes to Mary, and he says, and you're going to have a baby, and he will be the Lord, the Christ.
[2:13] Now what's significant is that when that happens, the text says, and Mary was troubled. So the very first thing that Mary experiences whenever the angel comes to her and says, you're going to be the mother of the Lord, it says that she's troubled.

She's in turmoil. And it says she submitted, and she believed, but she was troubled. And so the very next thing she does is she goes to see Elizabeth.
And when she gets to Elizabeth in the first part of the passage, the context that we just read, it's Elizabeth that helps Mary to have a song in her heart.
Because Elizabeth is the one who explains it. Elizabeth is the one who gives Mary the counsel that Mary needs. Now the very first thing to say is, the reason Mary can sing a song here, the Magnificat, the famous song, My Soul Magnifies the Lord, is because she went and took counsel with Elizabeth.
And Mary needed the friendship of Elizabeth to be able to sing the song. She was troubled until she sat down with Elizabeth.
[3:28] And God loves to work through community, and he loves to put new songs in our heart because we sit down with Christian friends and get counsel.

And that's exactly what Mary, the mother of God, that's what she needed. She was troubled. And it's Elizabeth that helps her to understand how she can possibly sing.
And now here it is. Here's what Elizabeth says to her, verse 42 and 43. She says, Mary walks through the door of Elizabeth's home, and Elizabeth said, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
That's the first thing Elizabeth says to Mary. And then she says to Mary, for behold, why is it that the mother of my Lord would come to see me?

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And so Elizabeth says to her, blessed is your womb, you are the blessed woman, and why is it that the mother of my Lord would come to see me?
[4:26] And then Mary starts to sing. And you see, it's because Mary, all of a sudden Mary gets it. That's exactly what Elizabeth said to her.

Elizabeth says, why would the mother of my Lord come to see me? And then Mary's thinking, why would I be the mother of the Lord? You see? And so the very next thing she says is, look at what God has done.
He has come and exalted a humble woman, a woman of humble position. Now she's saying two different things in that when she sings about that.
She's first saying, why would the Lord, why would the Lord give me the chance, the right, the power, the privilege to be the mother of the Messiah?
Because she knows that she is poor. She's talking about her humble class. She, Mary was poor. She had no power, no privilege, not at all.
[5:24] She was literally of a humble estate. She was the lowest class. And we know this because after Jesus is born in Luke two, she goes to give the offering that was required after birth, after the birth of a baby.

And when she does it, there were three levels of offering you could give a poor offering, a middle class offering and a wealthy offering. And Mary gives two pigeons, which is the offering God requires of the poorest people.
And she's saying here, in other words, she's saying, why wouldn't it be the case that the Messiah, the Lord would be born to Caesar's household?
Shouldn't this be the emperor's baby? The emperor's wife should have this baby. But me, I'm of such low class. I'm of such humble estate.
Now further, she knows that she's betrothed and a virgin. And that means that this is going to cost her because she's immediately going to be put away from the community, ostracized, because she's going to have a baby prior to being married.
[6:31] She knows the cost and it troubles her, but she submits. And then when Elizabeth says, you are the mother of the Lord, my Lord, she sings.

She says, look what the Lord has done, exalting me in this way from such a humble position in life, poor, lower class. But that's not the only thing she means.
And this is where the application really drops for us. Because if you're a Christian today, if you're a member here, you're a Protestant.
You're a child of the Reformation. You're a Protestant Christian, not a Roman Catholic Christian.
And we see here mistakes that the Roman Catholic tradition has made, I think, with regards to Mary, and we're about to see one.
But also we sometimes can make mistakes too. And we've got to be able to hear exactly what is said here, and that's blessed.
[7:29] Blessed is Mary. She will be called blessed for all generations. And so she's to be honored. She's to be seen as a model of faith, as a great inspiration to all Christians in all the centuries.

And that's exactly what the text tells us to say about her. And here's why. It's not just because God chose her out of poverty to be the mother of the Lord. But this is it.
She says it in verse 47. She says, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. You see that? And so what Rome needs to learn is that Mary says, this baby is God my Savior.
That you see what makes Mary so great and why we should think she's so great is because she it's not only that she is the mother of the Lord, but that she immediately realizes, I need salvation from the one who I will nurse.
She realizes she needs a Savior. She's not sinless. And she knows now, remember what Elizabeth said? Elizabeth said to her, you are the mother.
[8:39] How is it that the mother of my Lord would come to see me? That's in verse 42. But then in verse 45, Elizabeth says, the Lord told me that you would be the mother of the Lord.

Now one commentator says it like this, which is it? Where's the Lord in this passage? Where's the Lord? Is the Lord the one who has sent the baby?
Elizabeth says in verse 45, the Lord told me he was going to send the Messiah. Is the Lord the one who sent the baby? Or is the Lord the baby?

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Is the Lord the one who promised the baby? Or is the Lord the one in the womb himself? And the answer is yes. The answer is yes. And this is lofty.
This is astonishing. You see what Elizabeth is pointing to is the fact that the Son of God sent the Son of God, that the baby in the womb who is the Lord is simultaneously the Lord of heaven and earth at the very same moment.
[9:43] The baby in the womb is the one who at the same time is upholding the entire world, every single molecule, every single subatomic particle by the word of his power simultaneously.

The Lord sent the Lord. The Lord is the baby and the Lord is the Lord of heaven and earth at the very same time. And that's what Mary realizes, that I am the mother of my own Lord.
And that means that the baby in my womb is my savior. And she wakes up, she sees it, she knows what she needs. Now, that means that Mary is such a great example and inspiration for all of us because every single one of us here today needs to be able, wants to be able to say, look at what God has done, he has exalted me in my humbled estate.
Every single one of us needs that, every single human wants that, to hear, to be able to say, God has exalted me from a humble estate, a humble position.
And here's what that means. Mary knew it, it's what we need, it's what she understood, it happened to her. And it's what all of us need. And it's first being able today to say, to be humble before the Lord today.
[11:00] Can you, are you there? In other words, the first thing is to know your need today before the living God. Mary's great, not because she's sinless, but because she understood immediately the need that she had.

She knew who she really was, she knew that she needed a savior. Now here's a way that maybe you can ask yourself if you know. You can ask things like, I can ask you things like this, have you lived a life to make a name for yourself?
Is that the thing that you've really wanted out of life to make a name for yourself? And if that's it, if that's your hope, your salvation, then the truth is your name's going to be forgotten.
Because every name in the end will be. And maybe it's that you've lived to procure longevity. You want to live as long of a life as possible. And so health and well-being and all of that, that's really the hope of your salvation.
That's what you really want. And let me say that that's a good thing, but the coffin is going to win.
And maybe it's in all sorts of ways, you've longed to take control of your life and your circumstances and you don't want to suffer and you want to be as happy as possible and every little happiness as much as possible.
[12:20] You want pleasure above all else and entertainment above all else. And let me say you can't because suffering has come and it's coming.

And instead what we really need, what would really give you joy today? You know, whether you're a Christian or not, no matter where you are on the spectrum and on the journey of life, every single one of us today needs to say, I need to be saved.
I need to be saved. I know my need. We need to all find in our hearts, say the humble estate, the poverty that is deep, that is deep down within us, that every attempt we've ever made at trying to be our own master will not work.
And that is open rebellion against the living God. It's trying to be creator instead of creature. And we all do it and we all have got to come today and say, I need outside help. I need something else to save me because I can't save myself.
And Paul says it in Romans one that in any way, any way we're chasing self mastery, trying to command our own lives, that's being, he says, deceived and enslaved by idolatry, by the idolatry of our own selves.
[13:32] Individualism, it's fundamental idolatry. So today I think here's how we learn from Mary. All of us can need to say today, need to face up and say, there's something wrong with me and there's something wrong with the world.

And there's something wrong with the fact that death stands in front of me. And I've got a need and Mary knew she had a need. And that's what gave her the power to sing. Now like Mary, when you know you have a need, you can also turn around immediately and say, you know, if you've humbled yourself before the Lord today, this Sabbath day, you can say, God has exalted me.

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That's what she said. And you know, she didn't just mean that he had made her the mother of the Lord. There's more to it than that. He did great things for her.
He said, I will bless you. I have blessed you. But it's very important to understand that one of the ways we need to read Mary in the Bible is that she is like us and she is directly identified as us.
In other words, Mary becomes throughout the rest of the New Testament a symbol for the church, every single Christian in all the world. Let me show this to you.
[14:45] Luke 11. In Luke 11, Jesus is teaching and someone is in the crowd and they shout out, blessed is the womb who bore you and the breast that nursed you.

And Jesus says, no. Now somebody's trying to honor Mary and they shout from the crowd, blessed is the woman who gave birth to you and Jesus says, no.
And he says instead, blessed is the one who hears and obeys the word of God. And you see what Jesus is doing? He's saying, Mary is great, but what makes Mary great is not merely the fact that she gave birth to me.
What makes Mary exalted, great, lifted up is because she heard and obeyed the word of God. She understood what was happening. She knew who I am.
She heard the word of God. Jesus Christ himself and she obeyed. That's what made her great. In other words, Jesus is saying, anybody can get this.
[15:47] Anybody can be exalted and lifted up like Mary. If you hear and obey the word of God himself, Jesus. Now this happens again in a more obscure but profound way in Revelation chapter 12.

In Revelation 12, there's this prophecy, this image, this illustration where there is a woman and she's pregnant and she's crowned.
She wears a crown on her head and she has a pregnant belly and she's about to give birth and it says that she's in the midst of her birth pains. But then what happens? The dragon comes for her, the great serpent.
But she fights off the dragon and the dragon doesn't take her or consume the child and the baby is born and immediately we realize what it's saying. It's saying that, well, there was a dragon, a serpent in the beginning who came for a woman and that woman was consumed.
She fell in the Garden of Eden Eve. But here stands before us in Luke 2, a new Eve, a better Eve, a woman who submitted the point in faith where the dragon would not consume her or her child, that the child himself would defeat the dragon.
[17:01] But then in Revelation 12, the woman goes into the wilderness, it says, and she lives for all ages and the serpent keeps trying to bite her for all the ages, but he never succeeds.

And so the scholars, the commentators, they come and say, what is that talking about? It's saying that Mary is a symbol of the whole church, that the woman who goes into the wilderness for all the ages keeps getting nipped at by the snake, but he never can truly succeed.
And that means that Mary, who was crowned in Revelation 12, she stands in for every single person, every single person who humbles themselves before the Lord.
Every person who humbles themselves will be exalted, will wear the crown of righteousness, will be crowned alongside Jesus Christ himself, will be called brother, sister, and friend of Jesus Christ himself, that all of us stand with her and alongside her if we humble ourselves before the living God.
Now that means that the promise of this baby is that you can be exalted, not made much of because of who you are.
[18:16] No, remember, Mary stayed poor. It doesn't mean her circumstances were going to get better. She stays poor. But instead it means she was exalted beyond guilt, beyond death, beyond purposelessness, beyond meaninglessness, beyond chasing idols into true joy.

That's what it means. Now secondly, and briefly, why does she sing? She sings because God has made much of a humble woman. Secondly she sings because he has fulfilled the Old Testament in her.
Let me tell you three ways very quickly that God fulfills the Old Testament in this woman, Mary.
When Mary goes to see Elizabeth, verse 41, she walks through the door and it says that the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy.
That was John the Baptist. So John the Baptist starts dancing as soon as Mary walks through the door. And then Elizabeth says, I felt that the baby in my womb leapt for joy.

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What's going on? Why? Why is it signified that John bumped Elizabeth's belly whenever Mary walked into the room? Well, it's because in the Old Testament, this is a scene very like the Old Testament.
[19:36] And in the Old Testament, 2 Samuel 6, the Ark of the Covenant entered for the first time in a long time the city of David, Jerusalem.

And the Ark is that which God's presence is most associated with. God is so close to the Ark. The Word of God is in the Ark, inside the Ark itself.
And what happens when the Ark enters the Holy City? It said David leapt for joy. And now when the Ark of the Covenant enters the room in Elizabeth's household, the baby, John the Baptist, the prophet, the great prophet, he leapt for joy.
You see what it's saying? This is a parallel story and it's saying that Mary is the Ark of the Covenant. Not because she's the Messiah, no, but because inside of her is the very Word of God, just like the Ark in the Old Testament.
She is the Ark. She is the temple. She has now become the fulfillment of the whole point of the Old Testament. The Ark of the Covenant, the temple, has all found climax in her because of who's inside of her.
[20:51] You see, it's saying that she is the new temple and that in her is the true Holy of Holies, that in her, the deepest part of her is the Holy of Holies itself, the very presence of God.

So the first way she fulfills the Old Testament is she becomes the Ark. And that means that the baby that is in her is God. He is the Holy of Holies. Now the second way she fulfills the Old Testament, we see here, when you come to her song, we read from 1 Samuel 2 because you might have noticed that much of Mary's song is actually allusion and quotation from Hannah's song in the Old Testament.
And just listen, you can see Hannah says, my heart rejoices in the Lord. I rejoice in your salvation. God has done great things. The mighty are broken.
He gives strength to the feeble and to the hungry. The hungry have now become full. Those are almost identical to the lines in Mary's song here. Hannah gave birth miraculously after being barren to a child who would be the great prophet of Israel who would bring along the King David.
And now Mary, like Hannah, but much greater, will miraculously give birth to the true prophet and the true David. Now look, the reason she's quoting from Hannah's song here is because Hannah is a small fulfillment of which Mary is the ultimate fulfillment.
[22:25] And Mary is the ultimate fulfillment of Genesis 3.15. The gospel that was preached in the beginning of all of history, Genesis 3.15, when Adam and Eve had sinned, God turned to the woman Eve and said, one day, you're seed, you're masculine, singular, your son, your child will crush the head of the serpent.

One day, one day, you're offspring Eve, your baby will crush the head of the serpent who has destroyed the world, who's brought death and sin into the cosmos.
Now look, today, right here in Mary's song, she realizes she is the new Eve. In her, the serpent's head will be crushed, in her siege, this is the fulfillment of Genesis 3.15, this is the fulfillment of the first gospel promise.
And if, as Paul tells us, Jesus Christ is the new Adam, who will do everything Adam was meant to do but never could do, Mary is the Eve, the mother of life, who will bring forth the Adam that will crush the head of the serpent.
And that means that the baby in her womb is not only God, but he is the reversal of the curse of Eden. Now lastly, thirdly, Mary, the third way Mary fulfills the Old Testament.
[23:49] It says here in verse 51, 52, and 53, she sings, notice what she sings, she's going to give here her interpretation of the Old Testament, that's what we're reading.

And this is it. Notice, God's shone strength with his arm, he scatters the proud, he brings down the mighty, he exalts the humble, he fills the hungry with good things, he sends the way the rich empty. She's reading, she's thinking about all the things God has done throughout history, and she's saying that there's this pattern throughout all of history, that God takes what is poor and he makes it rich.
God takes what is on the throne and he cast it down, he lifts up the lowly. And so Mary's interpretation of the entire Old Testament is that God keeps doing the same thing over and over and over again.

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He chooses what is foolish in the eyes of the world and he makes it great. He chooses what is weak and humbly and lowly, humble and lowly in the eyes of the world and he makes it truly great.
[24:57] He lifts it up. He does that over and over and over again throughout the Old Testament and now here in her, she realizes, God is doing in me what he's always been doing from the beginning of history.

And she's not just talking about herself. You see, she knows that in God taking what is right side up in the eyes of the world, authority, aggression, might, strength, wealth, he's flipping it on its head and he's doing it in her.
She's lowly, she's humble, he's always done it, but it's not just her. You see, she knows that this fulfillment of this pattern of God that he's done throughout all of history is not really fulfilled in her finally.
No. Instead, she knows that the one that she carries is the exalted one himself who has chosen to become ultimately humble.
You see, the fulfillment of the pattern of all the Old Testament that God takes what is lowly and makes it great. God takes what is great and makes it lowly. The true fulfillment of that is not Mary, although she's part.
[26:13] It's in the baby. It's in the simple phrase, God was born. The exalted and the lofty, the name above all names has become lowly and humiliated even in her.

He's not only humble, he chooses to be humiliated. He chooses to be poor. He chooses to be lowly. He chooses to live a life of suffering for us.
He chooses to go all the way to the point of ultimate humiliation by being named your sin, Mary's sin at the cross and being murdered for it.
That's the true fulfillment of the pattern. The exalted one has become the lowest for us. Now listen, as we turn to a close, Mary stands there at the cross.
She was there and she watches her son die. What conflicted emotions and complexity Mary is Jesus' mother.
[27:18] How did Jesus learn his mathematics? Mary taught him. Who fed him? Who clothed him? Who gave him a roof?

Mary did. She watches her son dying. She knows I don't want my son to die. What mother wants her child to die in front of her and yet she knows at the same time this is my savior.
As he dies, I live. As he goes down, I'm lifted up. And what emotional complexity in that moment for her as she watches her son be murdered and yet in his death, she gets new life at the very same time.
The son will die for his mother so that she can know salvation. He will go to the bottom so that she can be raised to the top. And that's true of every single one of us today.
Every single one of us today who humbles themselves before the Lord and knows their need and lifts up their eyes and looks at the cross.
[28:29] He went to the bottom so that you can be lifted up and he did it for Mary. He does it for you. He does it for her like her. And she is a great example. What's so great about Mary is she's submitted.

And that means that the gospel, the good news is built right in to Mary's song because she says in verse 51 and 52, he scatters the proud.
And that means there's a command on to us today, don't be proud before the Lord. Instead, know that you're scattered. You know, don't be scattered in your pride.
Know you're scattered already. Be scattered before the Lord. No, be able to say today, I don't have it all together. I can't do this myself. I don't have the depths and the powers and the abilities to save myself, to even do life without the Lord.
He gives me every gift. He is my salvation. Verse 52, He brings down the mighty, He makes much of the humble.
[29:33] All of us today, we need to say, I've already been brought down. I know my depths. I know I'm poor. That's exactly what Mary knew at the moment that she watched her son die at the cross.

And it's what makes her a great example. Submission. She submitted and she believed. And that's for every one of us. It's true hope. It's true exaltation.

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And it's real joy. And lastly, my third point is one minute. And it was purposely planned that way. That's not just me cutting things away.
It's one minute point. And it's simply this. God, the reason Mary can sing is because God exalted the humble. He fulfilled the Old Testament in her and he put a song into her mouth.
And that's just to say that we should not close today without saying, without pointing out the fact that she sings. When she realizes what's happened, she sings.
[30:34] And this is what happens when the penny drops in your life and when you humbly yourself before the Lord, you get a song in your heart and a song on your lips.

And this is one of the great songs actually of all of human history, the Magnificat. It's been sung by many people throughout the world for all the ages. And it's named after the first verse, my soul magnifies the Lord, Magnificat from the Latin magnifies.
And let me just say this as we close. Look at what she says. She says, her song, the song that God has given her is this, my soul magnifies the Lord. I rejoice today in the salvation He's given me. She doesn't say, she doesn't say, look, I'm so happy today because I've turned my life around. You know, I was going in a bad direction.
I was struggling at a lot of bad habits. I wasn't working hard enough. I wouldn't get enough sleep, whatever it may be, but I turned my life around.
[31:35] And so today I've got a song in my heart. I've made my circumstances better so today I can sing. No, that's not real joy. Real joy is when you can say, my soul leaps.

I've got a song in my heart because God has done something. God has done something great for me. It's gospel, good news. It's a history. It's what Jesus, the baby, did for you in becoming a man, the boy who was always meant to die.
And every great author knows that that's the only real story there is, the boy that was meant to die. And so in the gospel of the Messiah who was born, know this today, God sings over you.
And if you realize this, you too will sing. So let's pray together. Father, put a song in our hearts today as we experience the beauty of the boy who was born to die for us.
And death did not hold him. And so we're thankful today that he's not dead. And we're exalted today in Christ because he was exalted. And so we look at Mary today and we ask that you would give us her example and her insight and that you would put a song on our lips.
[32:53] So that is what we will do now, Lord, before you. We'll sing before you. So we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

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