

The Magnificat

Intro: She is a young woman from a region of Israel that wasn't known for producing the best and the brightest. Sometime after puberty she was betrothed – promised – to Joseph, a carpenter. Not long after she entered her teens, the angel Gabriel appeared and this happened: Luke 1:26-30.

I. “You Are Highly Favored”

- A.** Who here wouldn't want to hear that God highly favors them? What a blessing! But note her reaction: the words troubled her. Not the appearance of an angel, but what the angel SAID troubled her.
 - 1.** This combination of words appears only a few times in Scripture. In Ephesians 1:6 it is rendered “glorious grace.” But Ephesians hadn't been written yet.
 - 2.** Mary was not ignorant of the OT texts. Her reaction is understandable when you realize that this combination of words was used when God approached Gideon in Judges 6:12 to hand him the assignment of overthrowing the invading Midianites and Amalekites.
 - 3.** “Good news – God is going to favor you with an important assignment.”
- B.** This is why being a Christian is a blessing and a responsibility. [Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-13] All who are given this blessing, this greeting from God, are about to be handed a task that can only be done by His power.
- C.** Read Luke 1:31-35. Mary knew her OT and would have recognized the familiar phrase: “you are now with child and you will have a son.” Those were the words of God to Hagar, a woman cast out into the wilderness, abandoned by Abraham and persecuted by Sarah. God's promise to Hagar did not guarantee her a happy life, but He kept His promise and her name and her children did not disappear from the earth.
- D.** For those who like to relegate Christ to the role of “good man”, or “social engineer”, or anything other than the Son of God, the words of Gabriel are troubling. When he announced the birth of John the Baptist – whom Jesus would later say was as great as any man born ever – the phrasing was “he will be great in the sight of the Lord.” When Gabriel speaks of Jesus, there is a stark difference – this is the Son of the Most High, the ruler of a never ending kingdom, the possessor of the throne of David.
- E.** Mary isn't Zechariah. She doesn't ask for a confirming sign, but she wonders how this will happen as she is a virgin (she might have had Isaiah 7:14 in mind, but...). Luke mentions the Holy Spirit; which he will mention 6 times in the first two chapters (which, of course, means Mary mentioned them to Luke).

- F. Mary's response is the same one given by Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who prayed for a son that she could give back to God. "I am the Lord's servant."
- G. Luke 1:39-45. Mary hurried to Zechariah's house and visited with Elizabeth who confirms the angel's message. Note: "blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished."
 - 1. There is an application here. Do we believe? Do we rejoice when handed a tough assignment?
 - 2. Do we consider ourselves blessed when the Lord turns our world upside down? Do we take comfort in being the willing servant of our God and trusting Him to keep His promises towards us?
 - 3. Are we believers?

II. The Magnificat

- A. Luke 1:46-56. This short passage has 12 OT allusions. It seems to have been modeled on Hannah's prayer [1 Sam.2:1-10]. Just as we use OT songs and prayers and stories to give us strength on hard, dark days, Mary goes to the well of her faith and teaching and brings up water for her journey.
- B. But unlike Hannah's prayer, there is a revolutionary aspect to Mary's song. Hannah asked for the poor to be raised up to eat with the nobles. Mary's prayer has the nobles being toppled from their positions.
- C. Like Hannah, Mary sees those who oppose God being routed. Remember what Samuel did and what he meant to Israel and you can see the pride and determination in young Mary's song. [some churches won't sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" or similar. Have we lost a certain militancy that was in our faith even before the birth of our Lord?]
- D. V.48 – in all of this, God has been mindful of Mary. [The Lord Has Been Mindful of Me] This first section shows that Mary knows that what is happening is from God and that she is a player in this drama. She trusts God to deal with her righteously.
 - 1. Mary needs a savior. She was not sinless.
 - 2. This reflects the prayer of Habakkuk in 3:18.
- E. V.49,50 – She mentions the attributes of God that will help sustain her faith and, through which, God will fulfill His promises. He has power. He is holy. And He is merciful.
 - 1. In the Pharisees' world, a false dichotomy had been promulgated between holiness and mercy. This Savior would shatter the wall between the two.
 - 2. That wall is rebuilt by legalism.
- F. V.51-53 – God is sovereign and will reign regardless of any governing power, any financial power, or any cultural power.

G. V.54-55 – Faced with such an awesome God, it is good to recall that He has been good to us, forgiving us, and loving us.

Closing benediction as written on OOW.