

A Practical Guide to Glorifying God

Luke 1:46-49

August 16, 2015

Well, as we turn to God's word this morning, we want to enter into the study here of Luke chapter 1. You can turn there in your Bibles. We're getting into a study of a very, very beautiful, joyful portion of Luke's Gospel. It's Luke 1:46, and perhaps the best way we can introduce this section of Scripture is just to start by reading the passage together, just let the words of this passage fill the air. So, starting in Luke 1:46, Mary's Song, here's what it says, "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble

estate; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.'"

That beautiful portion of Scripture is known as the Magnificat. You may have heard it called that before. The term comes from Jerome's translation of the Bible from the original languages in the Latin. It's called the Latin Vulgate; it's a translation of the text, and Magnificat is Latin for the Greek verb *megalunos*, the term is *megalunei* here in the text. It's the first word here in the sentence. Our translation is the verb magnify. Magnify. The Magnificat here is Mary's song of praise to the Lord, and, and in this song, she's magnifying the Lord, and magnify is really just another term for glorify. So, She's glorifying the Lord. It's obviously, as we read it there, obviously poetic. Beautifully poetic. It's also deeply grounded in Old Testament Scripture. You can hear that as you go through. If you've read the Old Testament, you can hear those themes coming through. Four stanzas in this song. Each one is modeled on the same poetic structures that are used in the Psalms, literary devices like parallelism, like chiasm.

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Take a look at your Bibles again. The first stanza, which is what we're going to look at today, runs from verse 46 to the first half of verse 49, and you can see the parallelism there in those first two lines. "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." You can see how my soul and my spirit correspond to each other. Magnifies and rejoices are parallel, as are The Lord and God my Savior. The, the theme in that first stanza there is God's mercy to Mary; God's mercy to individuals. Notice the second stanza that runs from verse 49 to verse 50. The theme is the character of God. You can see the character of God is exalted, magnified as mighty, holy, merciful. Third stanza, verses 51 to 53, that praises God for his ways, his, his tendency, his characteristic tendency to oppose the proud, but to give grace to the humble. Final stanza, verse 54 to 55, the end, it's about God's mercy to Israel, God's mercy to Israel. He's made promises that He's kept, promises that he continues to keep. That section is national, it's covenantal, and Mary, she doesn't think of herself merely as an individual, just merely as a, an individual believer before God in a personal relationship with God, though That's true, but

She's part of a larger picture of what God is doing with all of his covenant people.

Notice how the two stanzas that are on the outside, the first and the fourth, those are about God's people, Mary, the nation of Israel. The two inner stanzas, the second and third stanza, are about God; God, his character, his ways. That is called a chiasm. That is a structure that you're going to find in Hebrew poetry. And in a chiasm, it's the central ideas that receive the emphasis. That's what she wants us to focus on. That's where Mary is drawing our attention to God, to God. God is at the center of her thinking. He is the reason that she is singing this song. Now, like I said, if you're familiar with the Old Testament, you can see that Mary's song is filled with allusions to Old Testament Scripture. I'm not going to cover all of them, but we should look at one of the most important ones.

So, just keep your finger in Luke 1 and we'll come back there. But turn back to 1 Samuel, Chapter 2. 1 Samuel 2, verses 1 to 10, and that's another song. It's a song called Hannah's Song. The book of Samuel begins, well, kind of like Luke begins

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with a barren woman longing for a child; number of striking parallels that connect Samuel and Luke in their beginnings. A thousand years separated these times, but the time of Samuel and the time of Hannah was very similar to Mary's time. The time of Samuel was the days of the judges, wide-spread corruption, every man doing what was right in his own eyes, same thing in Mary's time. The same darkness pervaded the land. It was also a time back then of prophetic silence, when "the word of the Lord was rare" in Israel, 1 Samuel 3:1, just like Mary's time. It was also a time of a corrupt and an inept priesthood, the weakness of Eli, the corruption of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Those two men used to lay with the women at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, 1 Samuel 2:22. They stole meat from worshippers who would bring their sacrifices to the temple. They would take the best portions for themselves, share it with their father, Eli. Very similar, again, to Mary's time, in which non-Levitical priests controlled the temple. It was a political institution. They took advantage and made money off of people's sacrifices, and they took it to their own personal benefit.

Parallels between Samuel and Luke continue. Mary was visiting Elizabeth, it says in our text in Luke 1, in the hill

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country of Judea. Remember that? That was the same setting for 1 and 2 Samuel. That's where David is from, Judah. Most significantly in a parallel, the central focus of 1 Samuel, you know this, it's on the ascendancy of David to the throne of Israel. Luke is about David's son, Jesus, who is heir to the throne of his father, David. So, as we listen to Hannah's Song, keep in mind the child that she prayed for, Samuel, he was to be the prophet the Lord used to break the silence, to restore righteousness in the land, and to anoint David as king over Israel.

Mary sings her song in the presence of Elizabeth, just the two of them there. Zechariah was probably there, but remember he was in silence, couldn't hear what was being said. But Mary sings her song in the presence of Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's son also is going to break the prophetic silence, restore righteousness, prepare the way of the Lord, who is none other than the son of David, the king of Israel. Like Elizabeth, Hannah had also been barren. She'd wept bitterly over her reproach. She prayed fervently for a child, even coming to the point of making a vow to give him back to the Lord if only he would grant her request. So when God finally gave her a baby,

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she fulfilled her vow. She raised him until he was weaned; she brought him to the Lord and then prayed this song of prayer.

Look at Samuel, 1 Samuel 2:1, “And Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.’” Stop there for a minute. Similar to Mary’s opening line, isn’t it? Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Notice the next verse, “There is none holy like the Lord; for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.” Again, Mary said, “The mighty one has done great things for me and holy is his name and his mercy is upon generation after generation to those who fear him.” See the parallels? Praise for God’s character, praise for his holiness and his strength.

And now comes this section in Hannah’s prayer from verse 3 to the end of her prayer, which is very similar to Mary’s focus, on God’s opposition to the proud and his grace to the humble. Again, note all the similarities here. Look at verse 3, “Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth;

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for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed, the bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap and makes them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the Lord are the Lord, "pillars of the earth are the Lord's and on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of this faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder from heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed."

It's powerful. So much in common these two songs; joy in the Lord for his personalized acts of mercy, rejoicing in God because of his holy character, because of his ways, because of his mercy for the poor, justice for the oppressed. Most

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significantly, they're woven together in covenantal significance, prophetic fulfillment. When Hannah recited this prayer of song, that last line, "he will give strength to his king." What king? There was no king in Israel. That had yet to come. Both prophetic, both covenantal significance, Hannah's song before the coming of David and Mary's song before the coming of David's son, Jesus the Messiah. That's our God, isn't it? Weaving together history. How unsearchable are his ways. You know what I love about Hannah's song, though? You know what I love about Mary's song? Both of these theologically rich, deep songs, both come from women. They both come from women. God recognizes the differences between men and women. He created the differences. He put them there. He made them male and female, and he, he gave them different roles, and he designed each of them with their different characteristics, their different strengths. Women, in a way that is different than men, they have a unique capacity for recognizing the tender mercies of God. Men are often busy, preoccupied, aggressively attending to the provision and protection of their families. But God has hardwired women for tenderness, for compassion. A trait that helps them notice the plight of the suffering, the struggles of those who are less fortunate, the pain of people who are in need. Women have a tenderness for the oppressed, for those who are hurting.

Last week, Bret, Adam, and I went and visited the Resource Center for Pregnancy and Personal Health. The Resource Center provides pregnant women, many of whom are young, unmarried, frightened and pregnant, provides them with an alternative to the clinical barbarity of Planned Parenthood. I'm grateful it's there. As we walked around and took a tour, met different people, with the exception of a boyfriend who was there accompanying his pregnant girlfriend, we were the only men in the facility. The place was staffed entirely by women; women who had compassion for other women in need, other women in trouble. Not disparaging men here at all. Men care, too.

But we're so grateful for the women, we're so grateful for their concern, their compassion. We're grateful to God, to God for using these women, Hannah and then Elizabeth and Mary after her. He gave them these songs. God spoke through them. He showed us how he uses his power to demonstrate mercy, to demonstrate compassion for people. Our capacity for worshipping God because of this is so vastly enriched by hearing from these two women. One of the many features, one of the unique features of Luke's Gospel is its emphasis on women and their role in God's

redemptive plan. We get to enjoy this together as we work through Luke.

So go ahead and turn back to Luke 1:46 because there's something else that I want to point out there about Mary's Magnificat, just by way of introduction. A few weeks ago, we talked about the need in our church to reinforce the truth, one another, with one another. That's what we do in the local church, we speak about the truth with one another, we sing about the truth with one another, right? We look to one of the effects of the Spirit's ministry as the Holy Spirit fills us with God's word; singing comes flowing out of us, right? We sing, we are overjoyed because we are richly filled with Scripture. Ephesians 5:19, "We speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, making melody to the Lord with our hearts," right? As we unpacked that verse, we noted three basic patterns of music that we sing in the church and they're listed there, Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. Psalms come from the psalter, the Book of Psalms written by men like David and Asaph. Hymns are the doctrines of the Bible. They're written in poetic verse, put to music, sung in the church. Spiritual songs, those are expressions of our experiences, our reactions in walking with

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God. They're reactions that are emotional, they're intimate, that at the same time, they're rooted in deeply and bounded carefully by Scripture. Remember that, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs? Nod if you remember. Okay, good.

So let me ask you a question. What kind of song is Mary's song? What type is it? Is it a psalm, is it a hymn, spiritual song? Who says it's a hymn? Nobody says it's a hymn. Okay. Who says it's a psalm? Okay, I see one hand. I see that hand. I see that hand. Okay, two. Some people say it's a psalm. What about a spiritual song? Okay, more hands there. What about all the above? None of the above? I won't vote in church? All right. Think about your answer and let's take another look, all right? Since psalms are divinely inspired poetry set to music, and since we know that Mary's song is divinely inspired and it's written right here, right? We wouldn't be entirely wrong to see this as a psalm, would we? But nobody voted for that. So, no, no, Bruce did. You voted for that. Kevin did. All right, so you wouldn't, these guys aren't entirely wrong to see it that way, right. You find the same themes throughout the psalms. Many, many parallels between Mary's song and the psalms. So, even though it's not part of the psalter, it's clearly very psalm like, right?

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What about a hymn? Is it a hymn? Nobody voted for a hymn, so your not calling it a hymn. But since hymns are doctrinal content, they're packaged in elevated language, they're set to meter and music; we have warrant to call this a hymn as well, right. We could call it a hymn. Such strong theological content here. Deep, this is all about God. It's all about his sovereignty, his power, his salvation. This is about his strength, his holiness, his mercy. This song is about God's power to subdue the strong, the proud, the arrogant, to frustrate all their evil imaginations. This is about God's power to raise up the humble, the weak; his intent to fill his sovereign plan for Israel, so clearly we can see this is hymn-like as well, expressing deep theological truths in elevated language.

But what about that third category? We could see this as a spiritual song as well, couldn't we? In fact, I believe first and foremost, this is my vote, it's I believe, this is an excellent Biblical example of a spiritual song. A spiritual song is reactive. A spiritual song is an emotional response to the truths of God, and yet it's not an emotional response That's unrestrained. It's carefully, it's reverently hemmed in by

Biblical truth. It's governed by Biblical truth; don't want to miss the emotion, it comes pouring out here in the very first word. Notice it there in verse 46, "My soul magnifies the Lord." And that word, *magnifies*, is the very first word in the Greek text, put up front for emphasis. It's the word *megalyno*, which means to exalt, to magnify, to glorify. And it's an attitude here of celebration. Literally, as it's written in the Greek, she says, "Magnifies my soul the Lord." Then the next phrase is "Rejoice, my spirit in God my Savior." The emphasis is on the glorification of God, the joy of worship. Again, celebratory in tone.

Whether young or old, whether you're in Mary's age group or Elizabeth's, we all have the capacity, the opportunity to celebrate God, to rejoice in glorifying him. What these two women show us, what their songs reveal, how their songs exhort us, we've got to know God deeply, if we're gonna rejoice in him greatly. We've got to notice his working in our lives, his working in the world around us, and that means we've got to study his ways. We've got to learn to appreciate his character. Notice the words, soul and spirit, there verse 46, 47. They're parallel to each other here, so really, we should read them

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pretty much as synonymous. Some people try to make a, a radical distinction between soul and spirit, between the psyche or the *psyche* and the *pneuma*. There may be cause to notice a, a slight difference between the two terms, but, but not a radical one for sure. Point here is that Mary's worship comes from deep within and from the entirety of her inner being. This is comprehensive. She is all in. But if we had to decide between the two terms, you put a gun to my head and say, make a distinction. Okay. Well, we could say, we may say that the soul is the immaterial part of us that makes us, us. It's, it's the, what makes us individually distinct. It's maybe our personality, our emotional composition and make up. And we might identify the spirit as the immaterial organ of thought and decision. It's our will, it's our thinking. The spirit, the spirit finds its origin, its source, its life in God. God is the one who gave the spirit, who made the spirit, and that makes the spirit the point of contact with God. That's why Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, we're children of God."

Still, that said, it's virtually impossible for us to draw hard lines between soul and spirit. In fact, only God's word can divide between the two, right? Hebrews 4:12, "The word of God is

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living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to divide the soul and the spirit.” Okay, he can do that, but we certainly don’t have the ability to draw the lines. Mary’s not drawing lines here either. Those first two lines, they’re parallel and they’re the deep expression of her whole inner being, all that’s within her. Those two terms encompass all that makes her, her, and she’s bursting forth in praise. She’s rejoicing, she’s glorifying God. It’s profoundly personal here, too. Notice how many times the first person possessive pronoun shows up: my soul, my spirit, my savior. In verse 48, “From now on, all generations will call me blessed.” It’s extremely personal to Mary. Her song expresses deep emotion, intimate rejoicing because of intimate blessing. At the same time, all of those emotions, you notice, are bound tightly by Scripture. No stray emotions here, no errant feelings. Her emotions and her words are safely fixed up on truth, securely anchored into Biblical truth. So while we can see these verses as a psalm or a hymn, I’m making the case that it’s a spiritual song. And, in fact I believe Mary’s song is the prototype for in Ephesians 5:19 spiritual song. Many of the choruses written today are so shallow by comparison, aren’t they? So far off the mark. So embarrassingly superficial. We would do well to pattern our own choruses, our own songs after Mary’s song to follow its

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excellence in structure to parallel its depth in Biblical thought. That's exactly what we are trying to do right here in our church as well; always aiming for that.

Well, you're probably wondering when I'm going to finally get to my outline. The timing of your question is impeccable, as always, because I'm going to get right into the outline right now. You people are so sharp. We are gonna work away, work our way through these verses, but like I said, not all of them today. For this morning, as you can see the communion table is set up before us, it's very appropriate to focus our attention on those first few verses because they give us a lot to mediate on for the celebration of the Lord's Table. Notice what Mary said there, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me." As Mary enters into this magnifying of the Lord, as she enters into rejoicing in God her Savior, what she says here in this opening stanza gives us a really a practical guide for glorifying God. This is how we do it. That's fitting as we approach the Lord's

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Table. So, we can do it ourselves this morning in our own hearts and minds, but then as we leave here to do it out there as well.

Sometimes I think we're pretty vague in how we talk about glorifying God. We throw around terms like that quite a bit in the church. Let's glorify God together. Let's praise God together. We don't always stop to think about what that means. What does it mean really? How do we do that practically? Let's make this really simple, okay? Really simple. To glorify God is to make him known.

Sometimes we talk about a Cadillac being a glorified Buick. It's not that. That's not what we're doing with God. We're not, we're not making him more than he is. No, we're just basically pulling aside the curtains and letting God's glory shine through. We're verbally pulling back the curtains, verbally telling people what God is like and letting people see for themselves. That's what it is to glorify God. We do that in what we say. We do that how we live, too. We just heard a testimony about Ted. We've heard other testimonies about other people who've done that in this church, by their life, by the way they live, by the way they handle themselves; they're sober-minded, sweet, kind, joyful, attention to others. That glorifies God. That reveals

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him for who he is. The tender compassion shown in how this church is sacrificially giving to help other people in need glorifies God. But it's not just all actions. We've got to have words accompanying those actions. Sometimes actions can mask what's really deep down inside. There are cultists who do good deeds, but the God they worship is an idol. The God we worship is the true God and we need to glorify him not only by what we do, but what we say as well. We need to make him known. We reveal him to others. We show him for who he really is. And that is the purpose for which we've been created to give glory to God, right? First question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, says, "Question: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." You thought reformed theology was stuffy. No, it's not stuffy. It's about glory and rejoicing. Isn't that awesome? If we are to fulfill the purpose for which we're created, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, to make him known, and to rejoice in the knowledge of him, that requires us to know the truth, right? It requires us to know God through the truth. We gotta keep learning about him, and we've got to keep rejoicing in what we're learning about him.

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Listen, that's why only believers can fulfill the chief end of man. Only Christians can fulfill the purpose for which they're created. Christ has forgiven our sin to bring us to God through his death on the cross, and by fulfilling all righteousness, he has fulfilled the law of God on our behalf, and that means, in Christ, we have fulfilled the law of God. In him we stand perfect and complete in the righteousness of God. That's something that causes us to rejoice. That's something that thrills our soul. That's exactly what caused Mary to rejoice.

So, I want you to see this morning from this opening stanza of Mary's song, four practical ways you can glorify God, four ways you can make him known for who he really is. You see it there in your bulletin, the outline. And let's start with the first point: You glorify God when you draw attention to his sovereignty. You glorify God when you draw attention to his divine sovereignty. Another way to say it, you glorify God when you help people understand God as God, to know God for who he really is. Mary recognized God for who he truly is. And she spoke of him as Lord and Savior, both. He's the sovereign Lord, and he's also the sovereign Savior. Verse 46, "My soul magnifies

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the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." By glorifying God as Lord and Savior, Mary here recognizes God's rightful place as the absolute sovereign over herself and over all mankind as well. He is Lord, which is an explicit reference to his sovereignty. His Lordship is not just over the heavens and the earth in a general way, but his Lordship is over every individual soul in a particular way. Every sinner stands in relation to God as Lord whether he acknowledges that now or not because one day every knee will bow, Amen? Not only that, but every sinner who comes to God now, every sinner who seeks him as Savior, that sinner must come to God as Savior on God's terms, not his. Those who wanted God, who want God's salvation, those who want him as Savior without acknowledging him as absolute sovereign Lord, well people like that don't want God at all, do they? That's the very heart of unbelief to keep seeking all of God's good gifts, to enjoy all of God's good grace, but then to reject the God who gave it. When you parcel God into parts and you accept only the friendlier attributes of God, you know what you do? You deny the whole of God. That violates what theologians call divine simplicity. That is to say, God is not made up of parts. You don't accept the parts of him you like and reject the rest. You either receive all of God for who he really is, or you receive none of him; that's the deal.

Listen, that's the nature of relationship. You don't want to marry a spouse who says, You know, I like this part of you, but let's leave the other part out of the covenant because I don't like that part. I just like your exterior, but everything on the inside of you, can't stand. So, if we can do that..." We don't accept that even on a human level. Why would we do that with God? God is both Lord and Savior. And, magnifying or glorifying God means you must proclaim both truths. God is both Lord and Savior. To hold back on either one of those truths not only does it mean you fail to glorify God, but you distort the picture of God. You present a testimony about him that is patently false. If God is presented as Lord alone, apart from the mercy of his saving work, then he is going to be perceived as nothing more than an angry judge, a wrathful deity who will recompense all sinners with unquenchable fire. And that picture is quickly distorted further, turning God into a terrifying monster. God is certainly no monster, but he is the law-giver and the judge. He will recompense the wicked with wrath, eternal wrath, in a fiery hell. But That's not all he is. He's also a compassionate Savior who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The Gospel call goes out to all. On the other hand, if God is presented as

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Savior alone, apart from his sovereign Lordship, apart from his authority, without the demands of repentance, then he's perceived as nothing more than a benign grandfather, an impotent Santa Claus god, who beckons to rebellious, disobedient children. He's up there begging them, oh, won't you please come to me? If they feel like it, they'll accept him. If he sweetens the deal enough, they'll profess faith in Christ, but don't press too hard on the demands of the Gospel, the repentance part and the, leaving everything behind part, and the obedience part.

Listen, that is the god of so much bad evangelism, the bad kind, which elevates the sovereignty of the sinner, leaving the salvation up to the sinner's choice. The sinner remains firmly on his own throne, never budging from his position, never unseated from his pride and rebellion. The God that's offered to him is, is one for his consideration, an option that may improve his life in some way and certainly give him fire insurance for the great bye-and-bye. That's not the God of the Bible. That's not the mighty Sovereign of Scripture of the one that Mary sings about. That kind of God doesn't deserve a song. The rebellious sinner has to be cast from his self-assured position of authority. He must be confronted with his mortality, with his

limitedness, with his creatureliness, his true lack of autonomy. And he has to be thrown down before the sovereign God of heaven and earth. He is to bow before the sovereign God in humility, in remorse for his sinful rebellion and in repentance for his sin. His commitment has to be to leave his old allegiances far behind, to forsake himself and his sin, to forsake the world and the flesh, and the devil and to follow God as Savior and Lord. Mary knew God that way. This precious teenage virgin girl knew God that way. She rejoiced in him as both Lord and Savior. She glorified him for who he really is. Notice verse 48, "For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant." That word translated to servant, it's not the word servant, it's the word *doulos*, slave. Mary acknowledges her position before the Lord as slave, and that makes God her Lord and Master. And she rejoiced in those truths. She didn't shy away from them. She didn't back off. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. I rejoice to be the slave of God. He's not just the, *the Lord* and the Savior; Mary says, He's my God, He's my Savior, he's my Lord.

Listen, when you're rightly related to God like Mary was, when you bow in humble submission before his Lordship, when you come to him as your Savior on his terms, not your own terms,

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then you rejoice along with Mary and every other believer because you have become the slave of the Lord. You've become his property and that is a favored position, indeed, because God takes very good (care) of his property. He takes very good care of his slaves. In fact, he elevates his slaves. Jesus said, "No longer do I call you merely slaves, but friends. Slaves don't know their master's business, but I've told you everything." What master treats his slaves like that? Ours does. Mary's does. You can join the rest of God's people proclaiming the truth about him, glorifying him, drawing attention to his divine sovereignty. He is both Lord and Savior. Tell them both things.

Point two: If you glorify God, point two, when you draw attention to his tender mercy. You glorify God when you draw attention to his tender mercy. We already read it, but take another look at the first part there of verse 48. Mary gives the reason for her magnifying the Lord, the reason for rejoicing in God her Savior. She says, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior for," here's the reason, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant." Mary recognizes the sovereign God as her personal Savior, because he's looked down in mercy on her humble estate. Now that term translated, humble estate, is used to refer to

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someone of low birth, someone who is base, ignoble, common. In today's vernacular, we call a person, that person a nobody, they're a nothing. These are the little people, the people who are insignificant in the eyes of the world. No paparazzi following them. Implication is this is the person who, because of low social standing, it's someone who's weak, someone who's powerless, someone who's even poverty stricken. This is someone who has no power, no resources, no hope in themselves. This is a person who is forced to look outside of himself for help, even to look upward to God. Upward to God and God alone to find mercy because nobody else is going to help them.

You know to do that, to reach up to God for mercy, to abandon hope in self, to abandon hope in others and to reach up to him and him alone that requires a virtue that's in very short supply in our day, and it's the virtue of humility, humility . There's nothing like the sovereignty of God to humble man. We have to recognize where we truly stand before God. If we recognize that, if we recognize our utter destitution, if we recognize our sinfulness before God, how infinitely high and far away he is, it's going to create this virtue of humility in us, and it's going to cause us to look upward to him. As Jesus said

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in the Beatitudes, Matthew 5, it's only those who consider themselves to be poor in spirit, and those who mourn over their condition. Those and only those who are poor in spirit, who mourn over their beggarly condition before God. Only the meek, who look beyond themselves and away from their fellow sinners to find help and hope in God and God alone. God loves to respond with favor to the humble who cry out to him for mercy because that glorifies him, it shows his strength. The arrogant he holds at a great distance. He draws near to them, yeah, one time in the end for judgment. The humble, though, he draws near to, all the time, he regards them with tender mercy, with favor, with kindness, with compassion. As it says in 2 Corinthians 7:6, God is the one who comforts the downcast. Are you downcast this morning? Do you feel far? Do you feel like one of those little people and everything is rolling you over? Draw near to God because he'll draw near to you.

Mary glorified God by drawing attention to his tender mercy toward her, mainly because she is a believer. She's one of the humble penitents. She's a lowly nobody. But God was pleased to save her, to make her his slave, numbering her as one of his precious treasured possessions. Listen, you'll only, you will

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only recognize the tender mercy of God if you humble yourself before him. If you recognize your true condition. Quit lying to yourself, thinking you're better than you are, you're more advanced than you are, you're more gifted, more capable, whatever. Don't think of yourself that way. Humble yourself before God. That's why Jesus, according to him, it's those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek. To them and to them alone is the kingdom of heaven. They and they alone shall be comforted. They and they alone will inherit the earth. The rich, the self-satisfied, the self-assured, those who are frivolous, partiers, chasing happiness, and pleasure, drinking in all this world can give them, the arrogant, the strong, you know what? They'll never call out to God. They're just religious on the outside, but they never recognize their true need. When you're humble before God, when you acknowledge your lowly condition, cry out for his great mercy, you glorify him for his tender mercy, and you rejoice in that.

Listen, the gulf between our sinfulness and God's holiness above, it ought to, it ought to humble us. It ought to humble us, and we ought to walk in meekness with other people, loving other people. We're not proud, we're not arrogant, we're not

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stuck-up, we don't think we're better. We obey Paul's exhortation and we obey it with joy when he says in Romans 12:16, "Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight." Why? Because Galatians 6:3, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." We're all like Mary, of humble estate whether we recognize it or not. But those who recognize it call out to God for mercy, and God visits them with tender mercy. And then when God visits them with tender mercy, they glorify God for that tender mercy. They rejoice in him and they point others to do the same.

So again, just practically, you glorify God when you draw attention to divine sovereignty, when you draw attention to tender mercy. Here's a third point: You glorify God when you draw attention to his profound wisdom, to his profound wisdom. Okay, I need everybody to wake up here. Okay? Wake up, this point is somewhat subtle, but you have to follow the logic here. It's clear in the text, but you gotta pay close attention. Mary said, verse 48, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed." That word blessed, that is the same, it's a verb form of the word *makarios* and that's the same word that Elizabeth used back in

verse 45, when she pronounced a blessing up on Mary. Elizabeth said there, she said, "Blessed is she who believed." So Mary here seizes upon that concept, recognizing something new is taking place. She says, Mary says here, "From now on." That's a statement Luke uses over and over in his Gospel to show something different. It's a dividing line. It's a watershed event. After this, nothing is the same. Starting with Elizabeth, moving forward from her, every believer in all subsequent generations of God's people, they would call Mary blessed. Why? Why would all generations following Elizabeth acknowledge God's blessing on her? Because she believed. Believing faith is the mark of God's people.

I realize those who, there are those who claim to honor Mary, but they do so because of silly superstitions about Mary. The Roman Catholics say Mary was sinless, when she herself was conceived that she was immaculately conceived. The Bible doesn't teach that at all. In fact, this passage Mary acknowledges her sin and her need for a Savior. For she rejoices in God my Savior. Some others say Mary remained a perpetual virgin, that she didn't have any more children, Jesus was an only child. Ridiculous. Flatly contradicted by Scripture. Matthew 12:46,

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Matthew 13:55, John 2:12, Acts 1:14, all of those texts clearly state that Jesus had brothers; two of whom, James and Jude, wrote epistles bearing their names in the New Testament. He had brothers. She wasn't a perpetual virgin. She wasn't conceived sinless. She's like you and me. But she is worthy of honor. God did mark her out for special blessing, unequaled, unparalleled. Unparalleled and never will happen again. She's the only one in the universe ever who had this blessing.

But She's not talking about that blessing. She's talking about faith. We follow her in faith. We don't honor Mary by making her superhuman, elevating her above Christ, making her a co-redemptorist, dispenser of grace, that is a bunch of superstitious nonsense. But we do honor Mary, as Elizabeth did by joining all the generations who call her blessed because we recognize she found favor with God on the basis of faith. All who put their faith in God will find favor with him just as Mary did, and that's why glorifying God draws attention to profound wisdom. God has leveled the playing field so all can find access to him on the basis of faith. It's not by strength, it's not by wisdom, it's not by wealth or prestige, it's not by virtue of our birth or our nobility, it's only by faith alone, in Jesus

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Christ alone. And, God has shown us that we're all equally lost, all of us infinitely far from him. We're all in the same position before him, condemned in sin, hopelessly lost in and of ourselves. None of us can work hard enough, be smart enough, perform consistently enough. Why? We can't erase the stain of sin. We're equally dead before God. On our own we are completely dirty, totally defiled, utterly lost, but God has pointed everyone without exception to find salvation through faith. Faith is the virtue, get this, faith is the virtue which finds no virtue in the self. That's why the Puritan pastor, William Gurnall, he liked to call faith a self-emptying grace because faith looks outside the self to find all and everything in God and in God alone.

How does that draw attention to God's wisdom? Why do we look at that and say God is a very, very wise God? As I said, gaining salvation by faith, not by works, not by privilege, not by wealth, not by power, not by wisdom, salvation by faith, it evens the playing field. All humanity is equidistant from God, that is to say, they're equal distance. Each of us is equally far from him, but because of God and his mercy, everyone is equally near. As they say, all ground is level at the cross, right?

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That's pretty wise plan of God to do that. Not only that, but faith confronts our fundamental problem. It confronts our fundamental problem. The most profound problem that we have, the source of all our sin, the source of all our pride, the source of every lust, every angry thought, every bitterness, every complaint, the source of all of it is unbelief. Unbelief.

By drawing us back to himself through faith alone, God is here confronting our fundamental problem. He's exposing unbelief, our need to trust him to believe him, to take him at his word. Adam and Eve fell when they doubted God, when they distrusted him, when they turned away to follow their own will, when they believed Satan's lie over his truth, when they doubted his character, doubted his goodness. But God's people return by reversing that fundamental sin, by flipping that, by subverting that, believing God and turning away from the lie, turning away from Satan. The point of departure from God is the very point of return to God. It's by faith, by faith alone. So, when we declare that when we teach people about salvation by faith, you know what? We draw attention to the profound wisdom of God. Justification by faith. That glorifies God. It causes us to rejoice in him and to worship him for his great wisdom.

So you glorify God when you draw attention to his sovereignty, his grace, his wisdom. Lastly, fourth point, you glorify God when you draw attention to his saving grace. When you draw attention to his saving grace. We might even add to that, you glorify God when you draw attention to the power of his saving grace. Mary here magnifies the Lord, she rejoices in God her Savior because he's condescended to look upon her humble condition, blessing her with the ability to believe, and that has become the channel through which all of his saving grace flows to her life. In her words, "He who is mighty," or we could say it in a verb, verb form, the mighty one, the one who is mighty, the one who is strong, exercises strength, "He's done great things for me." Great is the word *mega*, *megas*, large, massive, monumental. Without question the salvation of God is the clearest demonstration of his mighty power. Some point out, rightly, I might add, some point out Mary's talking about God's mighty power to do great things for her by causing the conception of Christ within her, and that is not wrong. That's true. In fact, when you look back to verses 31 to 33 in Gabriel's testimony to her about what would be done to her in her womb and what that would mean for the world and for Israel, no doubt in

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Mary's, no doubt that Mary's mind is reeling from that magnificent magnitude of grace from God. She's reflecting on and who am I, why am I chosen, why am I so favored to bear the child who's going to save me and my nation? But notice how she says verse 49, "The mighty one has done great things for me." For me, again, this is personal. National will come later at the end of her song; there in verses 54 and 55, Mary gets national. She understands covenantal implications of all this. We're going to get to that. She's going to be giving birth to the Messiah, David's son, the political ruler who's going to save the nation, who's going to bring about the fulfillment of every restoration promise of God. She gets that. Here in verse 49, though, it's personal. "The mighty one has done great things for me." She's rejoicing in the mighty grace of God that saved her from her sin.

And the greatest demonstration of God's power and grace is in the salvation of sinners. The greatest wonder in the world is how God solved the greatest dilemma in the world by justifying the ungodly. How can God, who is utterly holy, who is perfect in righteousness, who is fastidious in the execution of his justice, how can God, who must punish every single sin, whether

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a thought, word, deed, whether sins of omission or commission, not doing what he commanded or doing what he forbade, how can that God justify any of us? How can he receive any of us to himself and still maintain his perfect justice? That's the greatest dilemma in the entire world. Folks, the way God solved that dilemma is the greatest demonstration of his almighty power. It's the greatest demonstration of the profundity of his wisdom. It's the greatest demonstration of the depth of his tender mercy. God justifying the ungodly, that's the greatest demonstration of his divine sovereignty, to justify any of us sinners while maintaining the perfection of his holy name; that is the marvel of saving grace.

How did God satisfy the wrath that Mary's sins deserved? By pouring it out on the son who would be delivered from her womb. How did God forgive Mary's sin? By looking upon the perfect sacrifice of the son who would be delivered from her womb. How did God receive Mary to himself as a woman spotless and the perfect fulfillment of his righteous standard? Again, by accepting the perfections of his own beloved son, showing his approval by raising that son from the dead and, like Mary, all who believe in Christ will likewise be raised with Christ,

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forgiven, spotless, perfect, and complete. That's worth talking about, isn't it? Strike that. That's worth shouting about, isn't it? That's worth singing about, and that's what we remember as we come to the Lord's Table this morning. Are you grateful for divine sovereignty, for tender mercy, for God's profound wisdom, for his saving grace in your life? I trust you'll not only rejoice in those truths in your heart, but you're going to bring glory to God by fulfilling your purpose, to tell others about him as well. Bow with me in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you, again, for the clarity of Mary's thinking. We understand that the Holy Spirit inspired this and that you are the source of all of this, and we're so grateful that you looking, even through Mary, as much as we honor her, as much as we look up to her and appreciate the example of faith and steady believing, faithfulness, we look beyond her to you. We look beyond all faithful servants to you because you're the God who empowers all of it. We love you. We give you praise and honor, and we magnify your holy name because of all of these things we've talked about this morning. Please help us now to celebrate those truths in joy with a clear conscience, having forgiven our sin, remembering the sacrificial

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death of Christ on the cross. We commit this time to you for
your glory, in Jesus' name. Amen.