

the Promise of God's Presence

How to Sing at Christmas

Luke 1:46-55

Promise of Presence



Luke 1:46-55:

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. ..."

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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."

- Luke 1:46-55

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How to Sing at Christmas:

1. When God is bigger than ourselves
2. When we trust God's reversal of the world
3. When our hope is anchored in God's promises

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How to Sing at Christmas:

1. When God is bigger than ourselves

Verse 46: "...My soul magnifies the Lord."

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We struggle to sing when our problems feel big and God feels small.

What feels bigger right now than God to you?

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If "magnify" means to see more clearly, what is that Mary sees more clearly about God?

1. That God sees her!

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant."

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Matthew 9:36: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd".

Mark 10:21: Jesus looked at the rich young ruler with love and said, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Luke 19:5-6: "When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today.'

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If "magnify" means to see more clearly, what is that Mary sees more clearly about God?

2. That God saves by grace!

Verse 47: "...and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior (not my teacher)"

Verse 49: "...for he who is mighty has done great things for me"

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We stop singing when we think that God owes us something or that we owe God. But we will sing when we realize that everything we have is by God's grace.

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How to Sing at Christmas:

2. When we trust God's reversal of the world

Verses 51-53: 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.

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It is hard for us to sing when we look at what's happening in the world.

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Mary's song reminds us that God will make all wrongs right, humble false power, and fill the empty.

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Takeaways:

1. A concern for justice is rooted in the Christian worldview, and it is robust enough to address justice with deep honesty, engagement, and hope.

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Tim Keller: "Today, there are a lot of people in this world who have a passion for justice and a compassion for the poor but have absolutely no assurance that justice will one day triumph. They just believe that if we work hard enough long enough, we'll pull ourselves together and bring some justice to this world. For these people, there's no consolation when things don't go well. But Christians have not only a passion for justice but also the knowledge that, in the end, justice will triumph...Confidence in the justice of God makes the most realistic passion for justice possible."

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Takeaways:

2. Our passage reveals God's heart for the poor and powerless. Christianity tells us that the poor and powerless have something to teach you and me.

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How to Sing at Christmas:

3. When our hope is anchored in God's promises

Verses 54-55: "He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

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1. God keeps his promises!

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1. God keeps his promises!

2. God keeps his promises...but sometimes, there will be waiting.

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In the waiting, it can feel like God has forgotten, doesn't care, or is absent.

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God often uses waiting not only to fulfill his promises but to form his people. Notice, Mary doesn't anchor her hope in timing but in God's character and faithfulness.

Verse 54: He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.

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One more thought:

3. To be anchored in God's promises is to be rooted in God's word.

Mary's song is woven with Scripture - she alludes to Psalm 103, Psalm 22, Psalm 44, Psalm 89, Psalm 98, Psalm 147, Psalm 25, 1 Samuel (in particular Hannah's song), 2 Samuel, Isaiah, and Job.

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We will struggle to sing if we are detached from God's word, if we're not familiar with God's word, and in light of culture's message, rely on "how we feel."

Singing and Rejoicing come from reading God's word, reflecting on God's word, remembering God's word, rehearsing God's word, and relishing God's word.

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Ligon Duncan: "And we, too, need to learn to lay hold of Bible promises. We must grow in our grasp of and faith in these Bible promises. We walk by faith, but faith leans on the promises. And those promises will bear all the weight that we can lay upon them. We may lean on them confidently."

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Conclusion:

How can you sing today?

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