

Advent Songs

Mary's Song

God Made Low

Scripture Reading & Candle: Anne Brown

5MIN

- As we step into the Christmas season as a church, we are stepping into a season known for its songs
 - No other holiday really compares; you could combine the songs of all other holidays and the list wouldn't come close to the list of Christmas songs
 - Classic Christmas hymns like Hark the Herald and Joy to the World
 - Popular songs like Frosty, Rudolph, Jingle Bell Rock
 - Horrible songs like: Grandma Got Run Over, Wonderful Christmastime, Last Christmas
 - No matter how you feel about any of these songs, the Christmas season is shaped by them. What we expect Christmas to be like, and what we think makes a good/bad Christmas is shaped by these songs. What we think this season is about is in small/big ways shaped by these songs.
- But before any of these songs were first written or heard, there were other songs that defined and shape what Christmas ultimately means
 - In Luke 1-2, Luke includes 4 songs that are meant to shape not just how we understand Christmas but how we understand our lives/world/God himself
- Over the next 4 weeks of this Advent season, we still study each of these songs: Mary, Zechariah, the Angels, and Simeon
 - 4 songs heard before, during, and after the arrival (advent) of our Savior
 - These songs are meant to give us hope not sentimentality and truth not tradition because they are 4 songs that put the spotlight on why Jesus came
- Today: Mary's Song – **Jesus came to save the empty and scatter the full.** – *see this one truth from 2 different angles: Mary's heart and Mary's words*

8MIN

THE EXPERIENCE OF MARY'S HEART

- To grasp what Mary is singing about, we have to see *why* she is singing in the first place – this requires we know some of the background (may/may not already know)
 - In Luke 1, an angel named Gabriel is sent by God to Mary, probably no more than 15yo and lives in a small town *in the middle of nowhere* called Nazareth
 - Gabriel tells Mary that she is going to have a baby boy, and his name will be Jesus. Angel didn't come because they hadn't yet invented tests yet, but this was a unique work of God – [1:32-33](#)
 - Mary responds wondering how this could happen since she's so young and not married yet. Gabriel tells her the Holy Spirit will bring this about, and God is already working because Mary's relative, Elizabeth, who has long been unable to have kids, is now pregnant, 6mos. pregnant!
- Mary then goes to visit Elizabeth: [Luke 1:39-40](#) – *more on E & Z next week with Zechariah's song*
- As soon as Mary and Elizabeth see each other, she starts to learn more about what God is doing in all of this: [Luke 1:41-44](#)
 - Pay attention to the connection between what Elizabeth feels and what she says; both make powerful statements about who Mary's baby boy is
- *(Picture this)* As soon as Elizabeth hears Mary's voice, she feels the baby boy in her womb kick; not just a normal baby movement, but she says in [1:44](#), "the baby in my womb *leaped for joy*"
 - This moment is less about Mary greeting Elizabeth and more about Elizabeth's baby greeting Mary's baby!
 - Elizabeth's baby would come to be known as John the Baptist (more next wk!), and he was the final prophet that bridged the story between the OT and the NT. His job was to announce that God's promised Savior had finally come.
 - Even as a baby in his mother's womb, he had a sense of who just arrived at his house – more than that, Who just arrived into the world
 - In this moment, it's almost as if the whole OT jumps for joy because the One God's people had waited on for generations had finally arrived!
- What the Holy Spirit guides Elizabeth to say to Mary shows that she understands this as well: [Luke 1:43](#)
 - Elizabeth refers to the unborn baby in Mary's belly as "my Lord"! She recognizes that God has sent the Promised Savior into the world to save His people
 - She encourages and affirms Mary for believing this: [Luke 1:45](#)

- As you can imagine, all of this is a lot for Mary to take in. But the realization of what God is doing doesn't leave her wowed with herself but in wonder of God: **Luke 1:46-49**

- Do you hear the emphasis on what God has done or what Mary has done? What God has done! Mary is in awe of the fact that she would be a part of God's saving work in the world

- Mary's own story is evidence that **Jesus came to save the empty and scatter the full.**

- God could have found a powerful queen who lived in a palace somewhere, but he didn't. He could have found a famous woman who lived in a big city, but He didn't.

- Nobody knew Mary's name. Nobody cared about Nazareth. But God knew Mary, and He knew Nazareth, and He knew His promises. Most of God's people in Mary's day assumed that God had moved on, but God's eternal promises were right on schedule.

- We do not have the same role, but for anyone that has been rescued by God through faith in Jesus, we have just as much to be in awe of? Do we live with the kind of wonder that Mary expresses?

Keller: **This note of surprise is a mark of anyone who understands the essence of the gospel. If you think Christianity is mainly going to church, believing a certain creed, and living a certain kind of life, then there will be no note of wonder and surprise about the fact that you are a believer. If someone asked you, "Are you a Christian?" You will say, "Of course I am! It's hard work, but I'm doing it." Christianity is, in this view, something done by you, and there's no astonishment about being a Christian. However, if Christianity is something done for you and to you and in you, then there is a constant note of surprise and wonder.**

- The reason Mary sings is because she is in awe that the Lord has saved her, that He is saving His people, and that He's using her to bring the Savior into the world. *This leads us to...*

8MIN

THE TRUTH OF MARY'S WORDS

- As we move further into Mary's song, the wording starts to change – from 1st person (Mary talking about herself) to 3rd person (Mary talking about the bigger work God is doing)

- Mary starts to celebrate that the salvation God is bringing about isn't just for her.

- See the connection in **Luke 1:49-50**

- Mary proclaims that our mighty God has done this great work in her life AND our merciful God will do this work in the life of anyone who fears Him – trusts, follows, surrenders to Him

- God is both mighty and merciful. He is all-caring, and He is all-powerful – and it's these attributes of God that shape how Mary sees what God is doing in her life and in the wider world.

- We see this work of His might and His mercy in **Luke 1:51-53** – *notice all the verbs (action words) and all applied to God! This describes what God is going to do through Jesus*

- In His might, He will bring some down. In His mercy, He will raise others up.

- Mary sings that through Jesus, God is going to bring down the full (the proud and mighty).

- God's salvation has come to earth; those who respond with pride will be scattered by God.

- You can be proud in thinking too highly of your own achievements or standards or religious discipline or you can be proud in thinking too lowly of yourself and wallowing in your failures which is just as prideful

- Jesus would later say (Luke 5) that the healthy don't need a doctor, but the sick do. He came not for the righteous but for sinners.

- Jesus came to save us from our own self-sufficiency. The message of Christmas is calling each of us away from believing the lie that we are fine on our own, that we don't need God.

- Stott: Sin is man substituting himself for God. Salvation is God substituting himself for man.

- The other side of this is that through Jesus, God is going to raise up the humble – **Luke 1:52-53**

- God's salvation has come to earth; those who respond with humility will be welcomed by God.

- When you realize you have nothing to give to God, that you're not impressive, that you are morally and spiritually messed up...then you are in the exact right place to be rescued by Jesus.

- "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling." – the message of Christmas is meant to both confront us and comfort us. Empty/full, lost/found, dead/alive!

- Mary knows that this is what God has promised since the very beginning – **Luke 1:54-55**

- Mary connects all that is happening to her to the promises of the Bible over the centuries; Mary connects God's promise to Abraham to God's promise to her

- This is not Mary's way of making it about her, but her way of realizing how small she is yet how significant God's work is. Through her, God was finishing what He started with Abraham!

- In this Christmas story, we are not considering a sweet baby who never says anything but the one of whom it was claimed that he was the son of God

2MIN

- These Christmas songs, Advent songs are not sentimental and hollow; they are full of life-changing, soul-shaping truths that are meant to fix our attention on Jesus, the promised Savior who has arrived.

- It's these truths that cause Mary to sing! God's grace has come to earth: if you meet it with pride, you will see His might, but if you meet it with humility, you will see His mercy.

- This first song of Christmas tells us that it's not that the good/full are in, and the bad/empty are out; but rather, because of Jesus, those who think they're good are out, and those who know they're bad are in. This is the salvation God has promised all along.

- **Jesus came to save the empty and scatter the full.** This is the salvation that our mighty and merciful God has promised and accomplished.

- Reflection: 1) What truths from Mary's song connect to your life right now? 2) Ask the Lord to show you your emptiness and His fullness.

He Who Is Mighty + Sending: Rodrigo (Gather and Go)

CUT OUT:

- The 4 songs we are studying for the next 4 weeks are unique to the Gospel of Luke. In the first 2 chapters, Luke doesn't give us a lecture that just runs through a timeline of events
- He animates the stories with songs expressed by real people experiencing real events, and he uses the words of the songs to show us why Jesus' arrival is important
- Matthew narrates Jesus 's birth through Joseph's perspective, whereas Luke recounts the birth through the eyes of Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary
- Mary doesn't just go sit alone; it's only through fellowship with another believer that helps things click for her
 - We find the Lord mainly in community; so often the word we need comes through a brother or sister in Christ
 - This conversation prompts Mary to sing – clarity, joy
- In this lovely moment we learned that the whole of the Old Testament as it were jumps for joy in the presence of the one to whom it has pointed for whom it has longed for all these centuries of waiting. All the longings of the Old Testament feed that joyful jump of John the Baptist
- In Elizabeth's confession that Jesus is her Lord Luke thoughtfully identifies Jesus as Israel's Lord Incarnate
- Connection to Hannah's prayer; both insist that God exalts the poor and humble yet overthrows the rich and the proud. Samuel is part of David's dynasty. In the end, David is not Israel's solution to defeating God's enemies and overcoming wickedness.
- Mary song therefore is the ultimate realization of Hannah's request. Jesus, the true heir of David, will finally see throne and vanquish evil.
- The person of Jesus through his faithfulness defeats all forms of powers especially the devil and his cohorts. The defeat of these authorities kicks the door wide open for those whom the devil is long held captive the marginalized and the gentiles.
- All of us whenever our background or beliefs have a picture of God many of us have a God we do not believe in because we do not like him if you do not believe in God because he is distant uncaring and unhelpful I understand I'm not believing that God either here is the kind of Christmas the God of history the God of the Bible the God who knows you and cares about you and makes promises to you and keeps those promises
- God is mindful of Mary as an individual because he is mindful of his people as a whole her significance lies in the fact that she is part of God's plan for his people