

Luke 1:39-56

The Magnificat

February 18, 2024

1. Intro

- a. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus..."
 - i. If you're familiar with Catholicism, you'll recognize those words as the opening lines of the Ave Maria, or the Hail Mary
 1. It's believed that these two lines were incorporated into the liturgy of the church around the 7th century
 - a. These are good and right words for us to remember, for these are the words found in the Scriptures!
 - i. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," comes directly from Gabriel's greeting to Mary that we looked at last week
 1. We might be concerned about that word, "hail"
 2. In our culture today, we might think of "hail" as a term of reverence to those in authority
 - a. Think about the anthem that sometimes plays when the President enters a room... "Hail to the Chief"
 3. But in the Scriptures, the word simply means "Greetings!"
 4. Greetings, Mary, for the Lord has bestowed His grace upon thee
 - ii. And as we'll see in a moment, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," are the words that Elizabeth will exclaim when Mary enters her house, and the baby in her womb, John, leaped for joy in the presence of the baby in Mary's womb, Jesus
 - b. These are good words for us to remember, for these are the words of the Scriptures
 - c. Even Martin Luther, the great Reformer of the 1500's, held these words in high esteem, writing many poems about them, and insisting that they remain a part of the church's worship
 - ii. Unfortunately, as you may well know, the Catholic church went beyond these words, and in the late 1400's they added the line at the end of the Hail Mary,
 1. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."
 - a. Well, as we saw last week in the words of Matthew Henry, we are certainly called to thank God for Mary, and even freely praise her as "blessed amongst women," but we are NOT to pray for her
 - i. For it is only through the name of Jesus that we are saved
 - ii. And through the mediation of Christ alone, we can approach the throne of grace WITH CONFIDENCE
 1. Mary is truly blessed
 2. For she is the mother of the very Son of God
 - a. But our prayers are for God alone, through Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit

- b. This is what we learned last week, and this is the framework we must have in place as we look at our passage for this week, Luke 1:39-56
 - i. Let's start by looking briefly at verses 39-45

2. Luke 1:39-45

a. ³⁹*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

i. Mary arose, and went WITH HASTE to go see Elizabeth

1. We talked last week about Mary's belief in Gabriel's words to her

- a. In spite of the UNBELIEVABLE things that Gabriel told her, Mary believed
- b. In her heart, she submitted to God's sovereign authority over ALL things, and she replied, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word."

i. Mary showed incredible faith in this moment

ii. But we also have to remember that Mary was human

- 1. And, like we all have experienced, there must have been some degree of doubt mixed in with her belief

2. I believe this is why she went WITH HASTE to go see Elizabeth

a. Look back to Gabriel's words in verse 36 and 37

i. After Mary asks how these things will be, since she was a virgin, Gabriel says to her,

- 1. ³⁶*And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God."*

ii. The sign that God can do the impossible has already been given, Mary... and it is in the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth

1. Mary believed the words of God

2. But she also had a need to see this sign for herself

- a. So she arose and went WITH HASTE to go see if Elizabeth was truly pregnant

ii. It didn't take long for her to see, did it?

1. As soon as Mary entered the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and said "Hello!", John leaped in Elizabeth's womb, and Elizabeth was immediately filled with the Holy Spirit!

a. And as Luke tells us, Elizabeth didn't just quietly say, "Oh, blessed are you among women, Mary..."

b. The words that Luke uses for "exclaimed with a loud cry" carry with them the idea that Elizabeth was overcome with great emotion, almost to the point of screaming with a loud uproar

i. So, in the Holy Spirit, with a loud cry, Elizabeth exclaims, *"⁴²Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"*

c. And then look at the HONOR that Elizabeth, again through the Holy Spirit, gives to Mary...

i. ⁴³And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

1. Mary was the mother of the Lord, and Elizabeth realized that this was a fact that was not to be dismissed
- d. And then in verse 44, we get the fulfillment of Gabriel's prophecy to Zechariah, that his son would be "filled with the Holy Spirit, even in his mother's womb", as Elizabeth says,
 - i. *⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*
 1. John recognized the presence of his Savior, even in his mother's womb
 - a. We could easily camp out here and do a whole sermon on the sanctity of a life in the womb, couldn't we?
- e. But Elizabeth goes on, affirming the belief that resided in young Mary's heart, encouraging her and strengthening her in her faith...
 - i. *⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*
- f. Such an amazing encounter between these two relatives
 - i. A greeting that probably took all of about 30 seconds, just absolutely jam-packed with doctrine and theology and the fulfillment of the promises of God
 1. If there was any doubt mixed in with Mary's belief, my guess is that it was fully erased in that moment!
 2. And this incredible exchange led to Mary bursting out in song, as she sings what we now call the Magnificat, a Latin title based off of Mary's words, "My soul MAGNIFIES the Lord!"
 - a. Let's look at this hymn together

3. Luke 1:46-55

- a. *⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

- i. As we study this wonderful song, we'll break it down into four different sections

1. We'll see that each of these sections marks a reversal in certain existing conditions

4. And so, the first of this song is, The Reversal of Mary's Status

- a. Theologians like to come up with fancy words to describe our beliefs, and so when we are discussing things revolving around Mary, we would call it our "Mariology"
 - i. And these first three verses of Mary's song are crucial in getting our Mariology RIGHT
- b. First off, notice how Mary directs ALL the praise to God
 - i. She begins with, "My soul magnifies the Lord..."

1. Obviously, by "magnify," Mary doesn't mean what we mean when we magnify something with a microscope, or a magnifying glass

- a. She's not talking about making something tiny appear a lot bigger than it actually is
- b. In this context, Mary is talking about esteeming the Lord's greatness
 - i. Proclaiming the magnificence of the glory of God

- c. In Acts 10:46, we see this same word used when the Holy Spirit fell upon Gentiles for the very first time, and Luke tells us of Peter's amazement as these Gentiles began speaking in tongues and EXTOLLING God
 - i. Cornelius, and all his relatives and friends who were in the house on that day, all received the Holy Spirit after Peter shared the Gospel with them
 - 1. And they MAGNIFIED the Lord, just as Mary did
 - d. We also see this in Acts 19:17, in the story of the seven sons of Sceva
 - i. These men had seen how demons were cast out of people through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and so they wanted to try it for themselves
 - 1. But when they attempted it, the demon turned on them, and all seven of them fled from the house, naked and bloody
 - 2. As a result of this, Luke tells us in verse 17,
 - a. *¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was EXTOLLED.*
 - i. The people of Ephesus MAGNIFIED the Lord, just as Mary did
 - ii. It's interesting to note that, immediately following this incident, Luke tells us that people who used to practice magic came and repented of their sins, and burned all of their magic books in the sight of all
 - 1. And he tells us that the cost of these books was close to \$10,000 in today's standards
 - a. Friends, this was a TRUE revival that happened in Ephesus, as the word of the Lord increased and prevailed MIGHTILY!
 - i. And it was because the FEAR of God fell among the people, and they MAGNIFIED the Lord
 - ii. Brothers and sisters, do WE magnify the Lord with OUR words?
 - 1. When others hear our conversations, do they hear a people speaking boldly and clearly of the greatness of the glory of God?
 - 2. THAT is how the Word of the Lord will prevail mightily in OUR day
 - a. When WE begin to magnify the name of Jesus through the words that we speak, the Lord will indeed do great and mighty things!
- c. So Mary magnified the Lord, and her soul REJOICED in God her Savior
 - i. And then look at what she said in verse 48...
 - 1. *⁴⁸For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.*
 - a. The literal translation of this phrase is, "For He has looked upon the humiliation of His handmaiden"
 - i. This humiliation is a SPIRITUAL humility, as one perceives their own moral littleness and guilt, and they lament over the condition of their own heart
 - 2. Mary did not see in herself any inherent worthiness of being chosen as the mother of the Lord
 - a. She didn't say, "For God has looked on how good of a person I am, and has blessed me because of what He saw."
 - b. No, Mary's response was one of humility

- i. She knew the condition of her own heart
 - ii. She knew the “littleness” of her own morality
 - 3. Mary was in AWE, as she realized that ALL generations from this point forward would call her blessed, NOT because of her own worthiness, but because of God’s great grace!
 - a. So she pointed ALL the praise and ALL the glory to God, “For HE WHO IS MIGHTY had done great things for her, and HOLY is HIS name!”
 - i. Mary experienced an INCREDIBLE reversal in her status as the power of the Most High overshadowed her
 - ii. And it was ALL according to HIS grace
- d. My friends, this is not just something we need to see in order to get our Mariology right
 - i. This is something we need to see as we speak of our OWN salvation
 - 1. God does not save us because He sees our good works and decides that we are worthy of being saved
 - 2. He looks upon OUR humble estate - a humiliation from which we are utterly incapable of escaping on our own – and HE WHO IS MIGHTY, saves us
 - a. In the most miraculous of all reversals, God takes a bunch of dry bones, dead and lifeless in their sin, and HE breathes life into our bodies
 - i. HE opens our eyes
 - ii. HE softens our hearts
 - iii. HE WHO IS MIGHTY does GREAT things for us
 - 1. Therefore, may our words echo Mary’s...
 - a. “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... HOLY is HIS name!”
 - ii. But, as amazing as all these things are, Mary understood that there was something MUCH bigger going on here
- 5. And so the second section of her song is, The Reversal of the World’s Political Systems
 - a. Look at Mary’s words in verses 51-52
 - i. *⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;*
 - 1. It’s hard to believe that these words are coming from a young teenager from the nowhere town of Nazareth, isn’t it?
 - a. What does she know of thrones and world powers?
 - b. Who is she to speak of men like King Herod, and Caesar Augustus?
 - c. Who is she to speak of the mighty politicians of the world being brought down from their seat of power?
 - ii. Well, she is one WHO BELIEVED, isn’t she?
 - 1. She BELIEVED Gabriel when he told her that her son would be great and will be called the Son of the Most High
 - 2. She BELIEVED him when he told her that her son, Jesus, would be given the throne of his father David
 - 3. She BELIEVED when she was told that of HIS Kingdom, there will be NO end!
 - iii. From this point onward in the happenings of this world, it would no longer matter who ruled over Israel
 - 1. Benjamin Netanyahu may be the Prime Minister of Israel today, but, for the last two thousand years, CHRIST has been the TRUE King of his people
 - a. And this will be so for ALL eternity
 - 2. Think about Mary’s words in light of the world’s political leaders today

- a. Mary sang that God has shown strength with His arm, and He has “scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts”
 - i. Is this not a stunningly accurate statement on the world’s leaders today?
 - 1. The pride and the arrogance that we see from our leaders, here in the US, and all across the world, is staggering
 - ii. We see men and women, on both sides of the aisle, living lives of opulence and luxury
 - 1. In their pride, they show us that they believe they are completely untouchable when it comes to the laws of the land in which they govern
 - iii. And in their pride, God has scattered them in the thoughts of their hearts
 - 1. The ineptitude of our leaders – again on both sides of the aisle – has become an embarrassment, hasn’t it?
 - 2. But is this not what Mary sang about?
- 3. This is the great reversal that God has brought about in Christ
- 4. And this is the great reversal that we must keep at the forefront of our hearts today
 - a. My friends, it does not matter if Joe Biden stays in office for another four years
 - b. It does not matter if Donald Trump gets re-elected
 - c. It does not matter who sits on the “throne”
 - i. If our leaders continue to live in prideful arrogance against the TRUE King, then God will continue to scatter the thoughts of their hearts
- iv. But the great promise of Mary’s song is that, as God is scattering the thoughts of the prideful on their thrones, He is ALSO exalting those of humble estate
 - 1. These words would be echoed by her son thirty years later, when Jesus would say in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the MEEK, for THEY shall inherit the earth”
 - a. Brothers and sisters, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has initiated a great reversal in the world’s political systems
 - i. Men like Biden, and Putin, and Netanyahu may rule the earth today
 - ii. But in the end, it will be the MEEK who inherit the earth
 - 1. It will be those who are poor in spirit
 - 2. Those who mourn over their own sin
 - 3. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
 - 4. Those who are merciful and strive for peace
 - 5. Those who are persecuted for the name of Jesus Christ, and REJOICE in that persecution
 - b. I pray that we can find great comfort and purpose in these truths, as Mary did in her day
 - v. So, in Christ, God has reversed the world’s political systems
- 6. And the third section of the Magnificat is, the Reversal of the World’s Economic Systems
 - a. In verse 53, Mary sings that “God has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.”
 - i. When you read the Old Testament, it is clear that the evidence of the blessing of God was seen through Israel’s material prosperity
 - 1. When David became established as King in Jerusalem, he brought with his rule a time of incredible abundance

- a. As the Lord gave him victories over his enemies, David's treasure increased exponentially
 - 2. Just think about the offering given when David commissioned his son, Solomon to build the Temple of God
 - a. 1 Chronicles 29 tells us that, between David and the people, over 8000 talents of gold were given towards the building of the Temple
 - i. So, a talent of gold in those days was around 75 pounds of gold
 - ii. Today, as of this past week, a pound of gold is valued at \$24,380
 - 1. So, if you do the math, a talent of gold today, 75 pounds of gold, would be \$1,828,500
 - 2. And the Israelites gave over 8 THOUSAND talents, just to go into the Temple of God
 - a. Anyone else curious as to how much money that was worth?
 - i. 14 BILLION, 628 million dollars
 - iii. God had blessed Israel ABUNDANTLY under King David's rule
 - iv. But 2 Chronicles tells us that that was NOTHING compared to the wealth under Solomon
 - 1. 2 Chronicles 1 tells us that in Solomon's day, gold and silver became as common in Israel as rocks on the ground
 - 2. The prosperity of those days was unparalleled, maybe throughout the entire history of the world!
 - 3. But what happened when Solomon began to turn away from God?
 - a. The Kingdom of Israel was torn from his hands
 - i. It would be divided through civil war
 - ii. The northern kingdom would be destroyed
 - iii. And the southern kingdom would end up in exile
 - 1. The Israelites would return to Jerusalem, but they would never again see the material blessing of those days
 - 2. For, as a people, they lived in almost constant disobedience to the commands of God
 - a. Therefore, the material blessings of wealth and health and prosperity would be taken from them
 - 4. This was how God showed His favor – and His displeasure – for His people in the Old Testament
- b. But, in Mary's song, we see another great reversal
 - i. For it is no longer the rich who are to be seen as "blessed by God"
 - 1. It is the hungry, the poor, the needy whom God will fill with good things
 - 2. And the rich will be sent away emptyhanded
 - ii. So what are these "good things" that the hungry will be filled with?
 - 1. Well, we don't have the time to go through a comprehensive list, but here are just a few things...
 - a. Jesus tells us in Luke 11:11-13, that one of the good things God fills us with is the HOLY SPIRIT...
 - i. *¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

- ii. Friends, if you hunger for the Holy Spirit in your life, simply ask your heavenly Father, and He will give him to you!
 - b. James tells us in James 1:5 that another good thing God fills us with is WISDOM...
 - i. *⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*
 - ii. Isn't that a wonderful promise?!
 - 1. It is God's good pleasure to give His wisdom to any who would ask
 - 2. And He will do so GENEROUSLY, and WITHOUT REPROACH
 - c. Or if we go back to the Beatitudes, another good thing that God is pleased to fill us with is RIGHTEOUSNESS...
 - i. Jesus says in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be SATISFIED."
 - ii. Do you hunger for more righteousness in your life, Christian?
 - 1. God is PLEASED to satisfy THAT hunger!
 - d. We could go on and on, couldn't we?
 - i. The peace that surpasses understanding...
 - ii. The contentment found only in Christ...
 - iii. The fruits and gifts of the Spirit
 - iv. And we haven't even talked about our riches that await us on the other side of eternity!
 - iii. The message of the New Testament is clear... in Christ, God has brought about a great reversal in the world's economic systems
 - 1. For, while others chase after the riches and prosperity of this world, we have this great promise found in Luke 12:32,
 - a. *32"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*
 - i. And how are we to live in light of this promise?
 - 1. *33Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*
 - iv. In Christ God has brought about a great reversal in the world's economic systems
 - v. He has brought about a great reversal in the world's political systems
7. And finally, the fourth section of Mary's Hymn is, the Reversal of God's Own Silence
 - a. In verses 54 and 55, Mary ends her hymn with these words...
 - i. *54He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*
 - ii. We learned at the beginning of our study on Luke's Gospel how God was silent for four hundred years
 - 1. From the close of the Old Testament in Malachi, to the message God sent to Zechariah through Gabriel, God had been silent
 - a. There were no prophets
 - b. No one heard from the Lord in those four centuries
 - iii. But in Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah, and in his announcement to Mary, the voice of God THUNDERED throughout the heavens
 - 1. It is TIME!

2. As Paul writes in Ephesians 3:9, this was the great mystery that had been hidden for ages in God
 - a. In verse 11, Paul says that “This was ALL according to the ETERNAL purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord!”
3. God was silent for four hundred years
 - a. In the minds of the people of Israel, they wondered, “Has God FORGOTTEN about us?”
 - b. “Has God FORGOTTEN the covenants He made with Abraham and to our fathers?”
 - i. Back in Genesis 12, God said to Abraham,
 1. *“¹Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*
 - c. Had God FORGOTTEN this promise He made to Abraham?
 - i. Absolutely not
 1. According to HIS eternal purpose, the time simply had not come
- b. But IN CHRIST, that time has indeed arrived!
 - i. The silence has been broken, and it will REMAIN broken throughout the ages!
 1. For, as Hebrews 1:1-3 says,
 - a. ¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high!
 - ii. He upholds THE UNIVERSE by the word of his power
 1. Friends, the voice of God THUNDERS today through His Son
 2. Christ is the unmistakable evidence that God has remembered His mercy
 - a. For IN CHRIST, the universe is held together
 - b. IN CHRIST, we have been given all the riches of heaven
 - c. IN CHRIST, we have been saved!
 - iii. As Mary sings in verse 50, this Good News of God’s great mercy is available from generation to generation, for all who FEAR Him!
 - c. Mary sang of these great reversals of God, and we have been given a great treasure in her Magnificat
 - i. But then Luke says in verse 56, in a bit of an anticlimactic fashion,
 1. ⁵⁶*And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.*
 - a. Hopefully you don’t feel like you’ve been here for three months, but its now time for us to return home, isn’t it?
 - i. But even this is a good reminder for us... we live out these incredible truths in the midst of ordinary lives, doing ordinary tasks, amidst ordinary people
 - ii. But may we not forget, as Paul also said in Ephesians 3:10, IN CHRIST, God’s great mystery has been revealed
 1. And the mystery is this:

- a. Through THE CHURCH, God's manifold wisdom is now being made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places!
- iii. God has looked on the humble estate of His servants
 - 1. For IN CHRIST, the CHURCH has been blessed – for ALL eternity!
 - 2. He who is mighty has done great things for us
 - 3. HOLY is His name!