

## MARY'S MAGNIFICENT MAGNIFICAT

I believe most of us adults have heard the expression, “Don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater!” What does it mean? It is a warning not to accidentally throw away **something that is good** while we are trying to get rid of **something which is bad** or that we don’t need anymore! Some of us “packrats” don’t have that problem, though, because we **don’t throw anything away!**

Although the saying **is now** a figure of speech, it seems to have had more of a **literal meaning** when it was **first used**. The expression was thought to have originated in 16<sup>th</sup> century England—meaning the 1500s—before the time of running water...and showers...and bathtubs. Water was carried to the home—usually in the spring after a long winter—and heated up, then poured into a barrel. Men would bath first...then women...then the children—in order of age—in the **same barrel of water!** Needless to say, the water got quite dirty—**disgusting** might be a better word—by the time it was the **baby’s turn** for a bath! So... “don’t throw out the baby with the bath water” meant “don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater!”

Why do I bring this up this morning? Because I’m of the opinion that sometimes—in our efforts to fight against the **worship** of Mary—that we “throw her out with the bathwater” and disregard her altogether!

Although Mary was **not sin-free**, she was a very **godly young** woman—even though only 12-14 years old! And **because she was godly**, she serves as an **example to all of us**—not just women. So this morning, we are going to look at some of the characteristics of Mary as seen in the “Magnificat.”

**What is** the “Magnificat”? It is Mary’s **poem of praise**—found in Luke 1:46-55—that we touched on briefly last week. **Why** is it called the “Magnificat”? Because the word *Magnificat* is the Latin word “magnify” as found in vs 46 “...My soul doth **magnify** the Lord.”

I found it interesting to learn that the **song of the angels** found in Luke 2:14—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”—is called in Latin “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*.”

(<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Magnificat.html>) Maybe some of you knew that, but I sure didn’t!

If we were to really dig into these 10 verses, **two things** would stand out. First, we would learn a lot **about Mary**. Second, we would learn a lot about Mary’s **view of God!** But since that is way too much to cover in one sermon, we are going to just focus on the character of Mary.

What kind of person was Mary? As pointed out last week—and mentioned just a few minutes ago—Mary was a **godly** young woman. But what made her godly? What do we learn of her character here in her “outburst” of praise? We are going to look at just 2 **godly characteristics** in the life of Mary that we should try to imitate.

Before we do that, though, I feel it necessary to point out one important reminder and that is this:

### 1. Mary was human

Why do I bring that up? Two reasons. **First**, because she is human, she is **not to be worshipped**. No one—in the Bible—is seen **worshipping Mary** while she was alive—and she certainly **should not be worshipped** now! Mary teaches us a lot **about** worship, though—and all her worship is directed **toward God!**

First... A. Mary’s humanness is seen in her praising God

We see that in vs 46-47. Her whole being—her soul and spirit—are bursting out in praise and thanksgiving to God. It is almost as if she couldn’t contain herself! In fact, I would go so far as to say that it would be just as appropriate to preach from this passage **during Thanksgiving** as it is now at Christmas time!

--In vs 46, she magnifies—meaning exalts and praises—**God**—not herself.

--In vs 47, she rejoices in God **her Savior**—not in her **saving herself**.

--In vs 48, she understands that although she shall be called “blessed”, she follows it up with “Holy **is His** name.”

--In vs 49, she acknowledges that **God is the One** who has done great things **for her**—she didn’t do great things **for Him**—or for **herself!** And—as mentioned last week, **all the “He’s”** in Mary’s song point out that **God is the One** to be praised—not Mary! Mary’s humanness, then, is seen in her **praise** of God.

But there's a second way we see Mary's humanness—one that we maybe haven't thought about before.

#### B. Mary's humanness is seen in her visiting Elisabeth

**Why** did Mary go visit her older cousin Elisabeth? Could it be that Mary **had some** doubts—and that her faith needed some encouragement? Although the Bible doesn't **specifically state** that was the reason for the visit, I'm of the opinion that it was **one** reason—possibly the **main** reason. Here's why I say that.

**1) The timing of her visit.** **When** did Mary go visit Elisabeth? Almost **immediately!** How do we know that?

--In vs 36, Gabriel gives Mary a "sign"—that her cousin Elisabeth is in her sixth month of pregnancy.

--In vs 56, we see that Mary stays with Elisabeth for 3 months—but leaves **before** Elisabeth has the baby.

So if Mary doesn't visit Elisabeth until she is in her **sixth** month...and stays with her **three** months...and leaves **before** the baby is born, Mary would have had to leave **almost immediately** upon receiving the message from Gabriel! No wonder it says she went **with haste!**

Could it be that Mary went to see Elisabeth right away because she **wanted to see for herself** the "sign" that the angel had given her? Could it be that she **desired confirmation** concerning the incredible message that she had received from Gabriel—that she would be the mother of Jesus?

Here's a second reason I think Mary's visit to Elisabeth was to encourage her faith. Not only because of the timing of **her visit**—she went immediately—but also... **2) The timing of her song.**

**When** did Mary sing this song of praise to God? It **wasn't** right after receiving the message from Gabriel that she **burst into song**—but it was immediately **after seeing the pregnant Elisabeth** and hearing what she had to say!

**What** did Elisabeth say? Vs 42 "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." In other words, 'Your child will be blessed.' Look at vs 43—"And whence is this to me, that the mother of **my Lord** should come to me?"

MacArthur points out that the word "Lord" is used twenty-five times in Luke 1-2 and is a title for God. Elisabeth, in essence, is saying 'Your son—the unborn One that is in your womb—is **my God!**'

Imagine what this would have done **for Mary's faith!** An angel visits her and tells her that she has been chosen to bear the Messiah that Isaiah and Micah had prophesied about 700 years earlier. His name would be called **Jesus** (vs 31) ...and the **Son of the Highest** (vs 32)—and He would be the One who would **rule over the house of Jacob** forever (vs 33). If that wasn't mind-boggling enough, she was going to **become pregnant** in an impossible, miraculous, **supernatural way**—without the involvement of a man!

But God—in His goodness and mercy—**gives her a sign** that she could go and see for herself! She **didn't ask** for a sign—but **God gave her one!** So she makes the visit, and **then** she sings this song of praise.

Maybe Mary had doubts **before visiting** Elisabeth—but she certainly didn't **afterward!**

Now for Mary's godly qualities. First... **2. Mary was a woman of faith**

How do **we know** Mary was a woman of faith? I see **four** proofs of Mary's faith here in this passage.

#### First, A. Mary's faith seen in her visiting Elisabeth

Some of you might be thinking, 'But Pastor, you just got done saying that Mary went to visit Elisabeth to **help her faith**, but now you are saying she went to see Elisabeth **because she had faith!** It can't be both at the same time, can it?' To which I reply, 'I think **both** doubts—and faith—sometimes **exist at the same time!**'

We have an example of that in the book of Mark. You don't have to turn there, but the context is that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain and **Jesus was "transfigured"** before them. His raiment became white as snow, Mk 9:3 says, and Moses and Elijah appear on the same mountain and talk to Jesus.

They **come down** from the mountain and are **met by a crowd** of people—and a man who has a **demon-possessed son!** Jesus asks the father of the boy how long this has been going on. The father says, since he was a child, then says this in **Mk 9:22** "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us."

You can hear the desperation in the man's voice, right? "If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Notice Jesus' response in **Mk 9:23** "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

In essence, Jesus is saying: ‘The problem is not in **my ability**—the problem has to do with **your faith!**’ Now **Mk 9:24** “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, **I believe**; help thou **mine unbelief.**” Did you catch that? The man **had faith**—“I believe”—but he also struggled w/ **unbelief!**

Maybe that’s what was going on in Mary’s heart and mind. Maybe she partly doubted—and she wanted to “prove to herself” that the sign that Gabriel had given her was true!

On the other hand, you could argue that she had to **have faith** or she wouldn’t have traveled roughly **eighty miles** to visit Elisabeth! How do we know the trip was **that long**?

--We know from vs 26 that Mary lived in Nazareth, but we **don’t know** for sure where Zacharias and Elisabeth lived.

--But we do know—according to vs 39—that they lived in **the hill country** in a city of Judah. We also know that because Elisabeth’s husband Zacharias was a priest, they lived somewhere around Jerusalem. The distance from **Nazareth to Jerusalem** right now is 64 miles “as **the crow** flies”—but 91 miles “as **the car** drives.” Splitting the difference between those two numbers puts us in that eighty-mile range.

So...did Mary’s trip to visit Elisabeth indicate faith—or her lack of faith? You can make an argument for both, but one thing that is **undebatable** is this: **B. Mary’s faith is seen in the words of Elisabeth**

Notice what Elisabeth says to Mary in vs 45 “And blessed is she **that believed...**” It is noteworthy that Elisabeth says this **before Mary sings** her song of praise. That seems to indicate Mary had faith **before** she got to Elisabeth’s house—and not just **after she saw** Elisabeth’s baby bump!

Elisabeth knew firsthand about **believing** what God said versus **not believing**. How did she know? Because her husband Zacharias got a visit from the **same angel**—Gabriel—with an almost equally astonishing message! **What** was the message? That she—Elisabeth—was going to have a child when—humanly speaking—she was **well past** the age of having children! In fact, Luke 1:7 says they were both “now well stricken in years.”

**How did Zacharias** respond to Gabriel’s message? He didn’t believe it! Look at vs 20. Gabriel says that “because you believed not my words,” you will be **unable to speak** until your son is born!

Zacharias the priest **did not believe** God’s Word, but Mary—a poor, unknown teenager—**did!** Third, **C. Mary’s faith is seen in her praising God**

--In vss 46-47, we see Mary **praising God**. **Where** is she when she says this? At the home of Elisabeth.

**How far along** is Mary in her pregnancy? Within her **first couple of weeks!** That means she had little—if any—**physical proof** that she herself was pregnant. But notice her faith!

--In the end **vs 48**, she proclaims that from this point forward, all generations will call her blessed. That means she believed she **was pregnant...**and that she would **carry the baby to full-term...**and that He would **be a boy...** and that He would be who Gabriel said He was: **“the Son of God!”**

--In **vs 49**, we see her faith in the words “For He that is mighty hath done to me great things...” There was no doubt—in her mind—that she was pregnant, even if there were **no physical changes** yet to prove it!

What about us? Are we people of faith? Do we believe what God says and take Him at His Word? Mary didn’t trust **her feelings**—she trusted in **what God said**—even if it didn’t make sense! She believed the message from God through Gabriel as found in **Luke 1:37** “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Mary was in an **impossible situation**—humanly speaking. You might be in one, too! But impossible **for you** is not impossible **for God!** Mary believed that **God could do the impossible**—we need to believe it, too! Lastly, **D. Mary’s faith is seen in her focus on God**

As pointed out a few times already, Mary’s poem of praise is **focused on God** and how great He is—not on herself! And because Mary was focused on God, she was not focused on **her problems!** What were some of the problems Mary **could have been** focused on? Way more than we probably realize! Here are a few:

--She is **unmarried—and pregnant!** People will **whisper behind her back** about her assumed unfaithfulness to Joseph—or because of the “craziness” of her story as to **how and why** she is pregnant!

--Both her and Joseph **are poor!** How could they possibly provide **the luxuries worthy** of the Son of God? --And how could she—**a sinful woman**—be an adequate mother to the “Son of the highest?”

Those problems—and many more—would have been **overwhelming** if that is what Mary focused on! But she didn't, did she? Instead, she **focused on God!** And that—to me—is another indicator of her faith!

Not only was Mary a woman of great **faith**, **3. Mary was a woman of humility**

In fact, I would argue that **humility** is one of the most obvious qualities in Mary's life! Here are **four** ways we see humility demonstrated in Mary's poem of praise.

First, A. She needed a Saviour

Vs 47 "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God **my Saviour**." I pointed this out last week, but it bears repeating. **God** was her Saviour. If Mary **needed** a Saviour, she was **obviously a sinner** that could not save herself!

We also see her gratitude for **God's mercy** in vs 50 "And His mercy is on them that fear Him..." I believe she was counting herself as one of those who feared God—and had obtained mercy & forgiveness from Him!

Now look at vs 53. Mary here, I believe, is speaking in **spiritual**—not physical—terms. The **spiritually hungry** are filled. Jesus said as much in Mt 5:6 "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." **The rich, though**—the ones who are **spiritually self-satisfied** and believe they have need of nothing—are sent away empty.

What about you? **Are you** humble and hungry? If so, God **will fill you!**

But if not, God will **send you away empty!** In the end of vs 51, we see that God "scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts." And in vs 52, we see that God will "put down the mighty from their seats."

Please know—God will have **the last word! God resists** the proud—but **gives grace** to the humble!

Second, B. She considered herself a slave

Vs 38. "And Mary said, Behold, the **handmaid** of the Lord..."

Vs 48. "For He hath regarded the low estate of His **handmaiden**..."

*Handmaid* and *handmaiden* both come from the same Greek word: "**doo'-lay**"—which is the feminine version of "**doo'-los**." Both words refer to someone who has **given themselves up to the will of God**. It is not a part-time servant who serves and then goes home—it refers to someone who **worships God and submits to Him all the time!** That was Mary! She was a bond-slave to God—a **whole-hearted servant**.

What about you? We are to always "abound in the work of the Lord" the Bible says in I Cor 15:58. Are you doing that? Notice Col 3:23-24 "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, **as to the Lord**, and not unto men; <sup>24</sup> Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye **serve the Lord Christ**."

Third, C. She was submissive to God's plan

Notice again vs 38, this time the middle of the vs: "...be it unto me according to thy word." There was obviously excitement—and great joy—in the heart of Mary because of the blessing and favor God had bestowed upon her. But...there would **be difficulties**. I already mentioned some of those. And then there is the **prophecy she heard from Simeon** when her and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him.

Simeon told Mary in Luke 2:35 "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also"—a reference to the **emotional anguish and agony** that Mary would go through some day as she watched what they did to Jesus—her son—and yet God's Son!

**God's plan** is not always easy...or enjoyable...or fun. Sometimes it is difficult...and demanding...and painful and sacrificial. **Pride** urges us to complain and fight against God's plan; **humility** seeks to submit to it.

**Mary** submitted to God's plan—and that is what **God calls us** to do!

Lastly, D. She was a searcher of the Scriptures

Mary—even though a young teen from a poor, unknown family—was quite familiar with the Old Testament. Commentators point out that Mary's poem of praise contains anywhere from 10 to 15 partial quotations of the Old Testament—mostly from Psalms and Hannah's prayer in I Samuel 2:1-10. **How** did Mary **know so much** from the Bible?

--Did **she own** a copy of the scrolls of Psalms? That is **highly unlikely** being from a poor family.

--So **how could Mary** have known so much? Even though the Bible doesn't say, I believe **I know the secret**. Are you ready? Here it is—Mary knew the Bible well because she **wanted to!** It took effort—she couldn't pull a Bible off a shelf—but she put forth the effort because knowing what God said **was important** to her!

What did that **look like?** I **don't know** for sure, but my guess is that it involved going to the synagogue for worship services whenever the doors were open.

--It involved listening intently when the Scriptures were taught.

--It meant memorizing—somehow—what she heard.

But no matter **how** it happened, it only happened because she **wanted it** to happen. And she wanted to know **the Scriptures** because she wanted to **know God!** Isn't that a sign—an indicator—of humility?

--**The humble** admit their need for God and **seek to know God** in the way God has revealed Himself—through His Word, the Bible.

--**The proud** don't see their need for God and don't seek to know God so they **don't care** what God has revealed about Himself through His Word.

Mary **wasn't perfect**—she was not sin-free—but she was a **godly example of humility** as seen in her admission of needing a Saviour... and considering herself a servant...and being submissive to God's plan...and being a searcher of the Scriptures. What about you? Are you humble? Are these evidences of humility in your life?

A lot to think about, isn't there? So what would God have us do with what we have heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, is Jesus **your** Savior? Jesus came to earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty for your sins. If you are too proud to see your need for forgiveness, He will send you away empty. He will scatter the proud who imagine they don't need Him—and He will pull them down from their seats.

Jesus delights in showing mercy—but will show mercy to you if you think you don't need it!

2. Please take your song book and turn to our closing song (217) – “In the Bleak Mid-Winter.” Notice how stanza 3 ends: “*What can I give Him? Give Him all my heart.*”

God wants our heart, doesn't He? Does He have **your** heart?

God had Mary's heart! How do we know?

--Because Mary praised God! Are **you thankful** for what God has done in your life?

--Mary called herself God's servant. Do you **serve God?** Do you ask God to show you what He wants you to do?

--Mary knew God because **she put effort** into learning what God says about Himself.

--What kind of effort **do you put into learning** what God says?