

MARY, THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD

Luke 1:46-56

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-56

Intro: I don't ordinarily speak on subjects related to particular days, such as Mother's Day, but, perhaps because of the condition of homes throughout America, I felt led to speak about mothers today -- and I trust that my leading has been from the Lord.

Among those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, I am sure that I would have no argument on my hands when I say that Mary, the human mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, would have to be considered the greatest of all mothers. And I say that although we do not go along with those who deify Mary. We believe that her Son, the Lord Jesus, was conceived, born, lived, and died without sin, but we do not believe that Mary was without sin. We believe, as the angel is reported to have said, and as Elizabeth her cousin said of her later, that she was the one most highly blessed of God among all women who ever lived (because that is the meaning of what they said). But this did not mean that she was Deity. And one reason I say that is because she herself said in the words I want to consider with you today that her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. See Luke 1:47. She would not have called God her Savior if she had been a sinner like all of us and in need of salvation from the righteous judgment of God. We believe in the immaculate conception of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not believe in the immaculate conception of His mother, Mary. We believe in the bodily ascension of Christ into heaven, but Scripture gives us no reason to believe that Mary went to heaven the same way.

Now, having said that, I also want to say that Mary must have been a very wonderful person, but she was made wonderful by the sovereign grace of God. Undoubtedly the Lord preserved her from many of the sins that other women had been guilty of, and her life was exemplary before our Lord was born, and afterwards -- an example for all young women, wives, and mothers would do well to follow. Unfortunately we are not told a great deal about Mary, probably because the Lord knew that people would be inclined to deify her, but we have enough to support the statements which I have made about her. I should also say that as far as her godly life is concerned, she is an example not only for women who want to follow her godly ways, but for men who want to know how to walk with the Lord. If we men think that we can only learn from other men, we are shutting ourselves off from some of the greatest saints you will

find in the family of God, *because many of them were women!* And that is true today. Some of God's choicest saints are women. I personally can thank the Lord for godly ladies He has used in my life -- many from Scripture, others from the family of God who have lived since the Scriptures were completed, and some whom I have known personally -- one of whom was my own mother, and another who is my own dear wife. And I could add to them my daughter, my daughters-in-law, my granddaughters and many of you ladies present here today whom the Lord has used in many ways in my life. I say that my life has been greatly enriched by the lives of some ladies who are now with the Lord, as well as many who are still living -- ladies who have not only helped me to know what it means to walk with the Savior, but ladies through whom the Lord has increased my desire for greater fellowship with Himself.

I believe that was one of the wonderful things about Mary. She not only loved God, and loved her precious Son, but I doubt if you could have been with Mary very long without realizing that she made you want to love the Lord more, and to walk in closer fellowship with Him. Thank God we still have ladies like that today, but let us look at Mary's words today to see her as an example not only for all of you ladies who know the Lord, but also as an example to all of us men who claim the Lord Jesus as our Savior.

The verses I want to consider with you are found here in Luke 1, verses 46 to 55. Matthew Henry called it "Mary's song of praise" (V, 588). We have no reason to think that she sang these words although in form they are like the Psalms. She was responding to the greeting which Elisabeth gave her, and it is most likely that no one but Elisabeth heard Mary's praise -- that is, no other human being. Obviously God heard it, and the angels heard it, but it was not spoken for people; it was the expression of what was in Mary's heart at the moment when she arrived, surely weary, and possibly hungry, from her trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

The first thing that we need to notice about this "song of praise" is that it is a song exalting the Lord, not one in which Mary was seeking to exalt herself.

I. MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD.

Let me read her song, or psalm, emphasizing what she had to say about the Lord. (Read vv. 46-55 emphasizing Lord, God, Savior, he, his, etc.)

Although she may well have arrived exhausted with the long journey, yet

the joy of the Lord was her strength. We can see from this song what was in Mary's heart as she made her long journey to see Elisabeth.

Now let us note in particular,

II. THE WAY SHE EXPRESSED HER JOY IN THE LORD (Luke 1:46, 47).

Her purpose was not to exalt herself, but to magnify the Lord. And we need to remember that Mary lived in a day when not many people in Israel were speaking or thinking like this. She wanted to make the Lord great in the eyes of all who would know what He had done with her. People had such a low, meager understanding of the greatness, the majesty, the faithfulness of God.

Her joy was in, as she said, "God my Savior." She was taking her place before God as a sinner saved by His grace. Mary may have had many things to learn, but one thing is clear: she was expressing her faith in God as the One Who had delivered her from her sins.

She probably was not trying to express something different from each other in these two statements by using the word "soul" in verse 46 and "spirit" in verse 47. It seems more likely that she was simply expressing the reality of what she was saying. It came from deep within her being. It was not just the expression of her lips, but, we might express it, *it came from her heart*. Her words express her acquaintance with the Psalms of the Old Testament. E.g., David's words in Psalm 34:3:

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

Also in Psa. 40:16 we have more of David's words along this line:

Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.

To magnify the Lord is to make Him appear greater, more glorious, more powerful, more wise, and more worthy of our trust than they have ever seen Him to be before. Her delight, her joy, was not in herself, but in God her Savior. "Savior" may show her understanding of what the Lord was doing with her.

Notice in the third place:

III. MARY'S HUMILITY (Luke 1:48, 49).

Notice how Mary pictured herself: “The low estate of his handmaiden.” Mary was a member of the royal family of David. She had to be in order to be the mother of the Messiah. But she put no stock in that when she considered her relationship with the Lord. The Lord had shown her *her low estate*. Spiritually there was nothing about her that would commend her to God as an object of His mercy. She knew her guilt. She felt totally humbled before God. She felt unworthy even to be the handmaiden of the Lord. What did she mean, “handmaiden”? The word means *a female slave, a bondslave*. Strong rightly says that this can mean a slave *voluntarily* or *involuntarily*. That is, she had either made herself the Lord’s slave, or He had made her His slave. Probably both are true. It means that she had given up her rights to herself, and that she was a lady totally committed to do the will of God.

And isn’t it interesting that she said that “from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” “Blessed” means *happy*. They would not call her “blessed” because she was Deity, but because she had been made the “handmaiden” of the Lord. She considered herself to utterly unworthy of the place the Lord had given her in His redemptive plan -- to be the mother of the incarnate Son of God.

In verse 49 Mary exalted the power of the Lord, and His holiness, as she declared that the Lord “hath done to me great things.” This is an expression also that Mary probably got from the OT. Let me give you some examples.

When Samuel was telling the people that it had pleased the Lord to make them His people, he added this:

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you (1 Sam. 12:24).

Or again, when the Psalmist was rejoicing in Israel’s return from captivity, this is what he said,

- 1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.
- 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad (Psa. 126:1-3).

Now it was a great thing that God did when He made Israel His people. And it was a great thing when He brought them back from captivity. *But*

nothing would compare with the greatness of what God did when he chose Mary to be the mother of our Lord, the one through whom the Lord Jesus would come into the world to provide salvation for all who would trust in Him. And Mary saw in this not only a display of the omnipotence of God, but also of His holiness. Only His Son could fulfill all of the requirements necessary for One Who was to be the Savior of sinners.

Now at this point Mary began to sound like a history teacher. She began to trace the way the Lord had dealt with His people throughout their history, thinking in terms of His redemptive purposes safeguarded and never forgotten throughout Israel's history.

Let me call this:

IV. THE HAND OF GOD IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY (Luke 1:50-55).

Mary saw in what the Lord had done with her the culmination of all that He had planned from the days of "our fathers," and "Abraham, and to his seed for ever" (v. 55).

Notice that Mary's remarks in verse 50 began with "mercy," and led down to "mercy" in verse 54. All of God's dealings with Israel, all that had to do with the working out of His redemptive purpose, was characterized by "mercy," mercy for His people to overrule the miseries which they experienced over and over again because of their sin. You can't afford to miss the evidence of the sovereignty of God throughout Israel's history. Let me quickly run through these six verses with you showing the emphasis that Mary was making. And there is not doubt but that she was being directed by the Holy Spirit in what she said.

Verse 50 -- Look at any period in Israel's history, even in the times of their times of greatest rebellion, and you will always find that God had people who *feared* Him, i.e., that were trusting in Him. Their faith may not have been strong, but God saw to it that He always had a people.

Verse 51 -- Here is the declaration of God's sovereignty: "He hath showed strength with His arm." What God had finally done with Mary was not in any way to the credit of the people of God. It was a testimony to the way that the Lord was continually demonstrating His power to see that His purposes were being carried out.

Often proud men felt that they could overrule the plan of God. Sometimes they were proud men in other nations, but unfortunately those

proud men were Israelites who had their own agenda, but were not concerned about the will of God. God “scattered” them, and put an end to their “imagination,” their plans, their thoughts which were not God’s thoughts.

Verse 52 -- Think of the times God humbled great nations, putting down the greatest of kings who stood in His way. Nebuchadnezzar is one great example. Pharaoh is another. It made no difference how mighty men might be, nor how highly they exalted their seats, their thrones, the Lord gave His people victory often when they were hopelessly outnumbered.

At the same time He “exalted them of low degree.” Look what He did with Joseph. And Moses. David was a *nobody* when the Lord took him from following sheep, and made him king over all of His people. And think of Elijah and Elisha. God has always delighted to take those who are nothing to bring to nothing the things that are. Why? So no flesh could glory in His presence.

Verse 53 -- “He hath filled the hungry with good things.” Was this not true of the forty years that the children of Israel spent in the desert going from Egypt to Canaan, and all of this in spite of Israel’s sin and rebellion.

“And the rich hath he sent away empty.” How many mighty nations did the Lord reduce to nothing because they were standing in the way of His purposes which would ultimately result in the coming of the Messiah into the world.

Verses 54 and 55 go together. “He hath holpen his servant Israel” means more than that God had helped them time and time again. It means that He had taken hold of them, at times restraining them, always guiding them and providing for them. The history of Israel would have ended in the desert if it had not been for the way the Lord stood by His people. And God did it in remembrance of His mercy, His redemptive plan, His purpose to bring salvation not only to Israel, but to all of the nations of the earth.

And then read verse 55. (Read.)

Mary could look back through the history of Israel and could see the hand of the Lord in all that had taken place, and she attributed it in this last verse to the fact that God would not be unfaithful to His promise of salvation which was given at the beginning of time. What an amazing summary Mary gave in just a few words of the faithfulness of God

throughout Israel's history, culminating in what He was at that time doing to her.

Concl: Today is mother's day in the world. We have been examining just one small part in the life of the lady who was destined by God to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we contrast her with the ideas that are prominent in the world today about what a mother should be, we find little basis for comparison. I have said that Mary, the mother of our Lord, is an example for all of us. So men, we need to pay attention. But let me address myself to the mothers who are here today, and to you who hope some day to be mothers, and let us see how Mary, the mother of our Lord, is still an example to follow.

First, she is an example because she obviously had made the Lord the most important Person in her life. She couldn't say too much in honor of her God. She loved Him, and she wanted everyone not only to know Him, but also to think the very best of Him.

Second, she is an example in her humility. She knew that there was nothing about her that deserved the Lord's blessing in saving her, and certainly nothing that could be in her to deserve the place that God had given to her. She was delighted to be "his handmaiden." And she knew that taking such a place was the happiest of all places to have.

Third, she is an example because of her understanding of the sovereignty of the Lord. She could look back to the beginning of time and see the hand of the Lord in all that had taken place. She saw that the Lord's hand was evident in everything that had taken place, and therefore it was easy for her to see the hand of the Lord in what had happened to her. No son ever born to any woman could possibly have been greater than the Son Who was born to her.

But she not only could see the hand of the Lord in all of history, but she could see that all history had to do with God's purpose in salvation which was evident in all that God was doing -- as she expressed it in her song.

Fourth, her song reveals an understanding of the Word of God. In simple ways she was able to weave into her song the wonderful works of the Lord.

The other day I was reading Psalm 105 and I was particularly impressed with the first two verses of the Psalm. Let me read them for you:

1 O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name:

make known his deeds among the people.

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

We are to do what Mary was doing in her song. Not all of us can compose songs, but there are a lot of wonderful psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which we can use to praise the Lord. But the two statements that struck me were, “Make known his deeds among the people,” and, “Talk ye of all his wondrous works.”

Most of us are not at all hesitant to talk about our works, but how well do we know the “deeds” of the Lord, and His “works.” All that Mary had to say about herself was very humbling, but she couldn’t say enough about the Lord and His works. *If you and I are to talk about the works of the Lord, how long would we be talking. In other words, how well do you know your Bible and how much do you look upon the works of the Lord in the Bible. And even as far as your life is concerned, do you see the hand of the Lord in what is happening to you today? Do you see His hand in the problems you face, in the prayers which have not been answered, in the trials you are going through? And in those things that you and are inclined to call “good,” do you see them as mercies from God.*

I hope that this brief glimpse we have had today into the life of Mary, the mother of our Lord, will cause us to come back to this passage again and again with the prayer on our hearts that the Lord would make us like Mary because Mary in so many ways was like her Son even before He was born. She had become well acquainted with Him through the pages of Scripture and in her fellowship with Him before she ever saw Him in the flesh, held Him in her arms, and nursed Him at her breast.

No one else had the place which God gave to Mary, but we can all seek by God’s grace to learn from Mary what it means to love Him, and to give our lives to Him to do His will.