

December 22, 2024 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

### Rejoice in Your Coming Savior

For as famous as Mary is, there is still a lot we that do not know about her. We do not know how old she was, although we guess she was about 16-18 years old. We do not know exactly what she looked like, although she was probably like a typical Palestinian girl. An early church tradition says that her parents were named Joachim and Anna, but we do not know. We do not even know if they were still alive. We do not know if she had any brothers or sisters. We do not know if she was born in Nazareth or moved there from someplace else. There is a lot we do not know about Mary, but we do know that she was excited.

One day, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. We do not know what Mary was doing at the time. Some suggest housework. Still others like to think that she was praying for God to send the Messiah. We do not know. The angel explained that the Holy Spirit was going to perform a miracle inside of Mary and that she would give birth to the God-Man Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. Mary was excited.

We like to share exciting news with others. When a woman realizes she is pregnant, she is excited to tell her friends and relatives. But who could Mary tell? If she told her family or fiancé, they would not believe that her pregnancy was a miracle. The angel told her that her relative, Elisabeth, who was too old to have a child, was 6 months along in her pregnancy with John the Baptizer. That was a miracle pregnancy too. Elisabeth was someone who would understand. Both of these ladies were expecting unexpected sons. Elisabeth was someone she could talk to. Mary set out to visit Elisabeth.

As soon as Mary arrived she shared a poem. I like to think that Mary composed her poem while she walked the nearly 70 miles to see Elisabeth. The poem is full of Old Testament references, such as 1 Samuel 1&2, Psalm 103, Psalm 107, Psalm 47. Mary really knew her Bible. She was a sincere lady of faith. The theme of the poem is one of rejoicing. She did not rejoice because she, a poor girl, would be famous, which was true. She did not rejoice because she was going to have a baby, although that, too, was exciting. She did not rejoice because the Holy Spirit performed a miracle inside of her, which is also amazing. She rejoiced primarily and especially because her Savior was coming. Her poem of

praise is one of the most famous poems or songs in the Bible and has been set to hundreds of musical setting. We dare not rush through it. We want to savor its juices. As we review this poem of praise, we will also be moved to rejoice in our coming Savior.

In verse 46-48a, we hear Mary's joy just explode, "**My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.**" It is important to note that through her whole poem Mary continues to talk about what God has done for her. She gives all glory and praise to God. In the very first phrase she calls God, "**my Savior.**" That is significant. Some people think that if Mary gave birth to a sinless Jesus, then she also had to be sinless. But Mary herself debunks that theory. She admitted she needed a Savior. She was a sinner. And the fact that her Savior was coming to take away her sins moved her to rejoice greatly.

It is great that we exchange presents with loved ones, or decorate our houses and have parties. As we get excited for Christmas, however, we need make sure we pause and check our hearts. That – I hope! – is the great benefit of all our special services. Do we recognize and admit that we are not perfect, that we are sinners, that we are corrupt to the core, that we deserve damnation? Unless we do, Jesus will not mean very much to us. Why even bother celebrating Christmas? Sinners cannot save themselves. We need someone to take away our guilt. We need someone to die in our place. We need a savior. Because of that child growing inside Mary, we are going to live after we die. We are going to be perfect and holy forever in heaven. That is a reason to rejoice just like Mary.

She explained her cause for gladness as she continued in :48b-50, "**From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.**" Notice again how Mary keeps talking about how awesome God is and what he has done for her. "**All generations will call me blessed.**" Not, "All generations will be amazed at how holy and pure I am." When Elisabeth first greeted her, she kept saying how blessed Mary was. By its very definition, blessings can not be earned. Blessings, good things from God, are given by God because he is good, not because we are good. Mary talked about God's mercy. Mercy is a special aspect of love. Mercy means showing loving concern to someone who is helpless. God has certainly had mercy on all of us. We only deserve punishment for our sins, but he gives us forgiveness and eternal life for free. That moves us to rejoice like Mary.

Mary explained what God did for his people in :51-53. **“He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.”** Mary knew that she was still a poor girl and that the rich people were still living in their mansions. She was not delusional. She did not think that God was going to upset the social order of the world by eliminating racism and poverty, etc.. The Messiah was going to be a spiritual savior. When Mary talks about the rich and the poor, hungry and humble, we have to understand this as the spiritually poor, hungry and humble. Jesus would later explain the same thing in his Sermon on the Mount when he said, (Mt 5:6), **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”** Those who were hungry for salvation, those who recognize that they need spiritual nourishment, are the people who realize that we deserve nothing from God. We can not stand in front of God and impress him with our good work and hard efforts for his kingdom. We can not give anything to God that would make him save us. Martin Luther explained that when it comes to our status before God, we are beggars, poor, hungry, humble. Mary said that God had filled the spiritually poor with the good things of his kingdom – forgiveness and eternal life.

The rich people she referred to would be like the Jewish leaders who thought they had enough goodness to earn their way into heaven, were not looking for any spiritual nourishment because they thought they were good enough. They thought they were spiritual rich and did not need a Savior. Those are the people that God sends away empty saying, “You don't want forgiveness and eternal life from me and I will not force it on you.” They will go away to eternity empty.

Every time we confess our sins, we are admitting that we are spiritually hungry and spiritually poor. We need help. Just like Mary, the Lord has filled us with the good things of life in his kingdom forgiveness and eternal life. This also moves us to rejoice with Mary. In :54,55, Mary explained that the coming of the Savior was the fulfillment of God's promise to save his people. **“He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”** Little children are anxiously counting down the days to Christmas. God's people had been waiting for thousands of years and finally the promised Savior was going to be born. He had already come into the world and was growing inside of Mary. When she

talked about Abraham and his descendants, she was not just talking about the Old Testament people, or even the Jews who were living at her time. She was talking about you and me. All believers in Jesus of all time belong to the spiritual nation of Israel. We just finished singing, **“Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel.”** You are Israel. Through faith, you are Abraham's descendants. You have the same faith as Abraham. Through that child of Mary, the Lord has been merciful to you. This, also, moves us to rejoice with Mary.

There is no more important message than a Savior who is coming for us. Politician's promises and government programs have not, can not, and will not ever solve all our society's problems. The most efficient welfare system will not take away all poverty or hunger. A growing economy will not get rid of greed and selfishness. The greatest military weapon cannot stop the devil. The greatest medical technology cannot create life or prevent death. We need a Savior from sin and death. We need Jesus. We can say, along with Mary (:49), **“The Mighty One has done great things for me.”** Only the blood of Jesus could pay your admission price to heaven. Only Christ Jesus was able to crush the devil's head and render him powerless over you. Only your Savior Jesus could give you life on this earth and one day eternal life in heaven. He has done great things for you. He sent his Son to be your Savior.

As soon as Mary approached Elisabeth, her baby jumped for joy. John the Baptizer was already thrilled to be in the presence of Jesus, the Messiah. We can understand his excitement. The fact that Mary was pregnant with the Christ was the first domino in the whole plan of salvation. The fact that Mary was pregnant meant the Jesus would be born, would live a perfect life, would die an innocent death and would gloriously rise again. The whole plan of salvation is a solid unit. And because Jesus came the first time as our Savior means that he will also keep his other promise to come a second and final time to take us home to heaven forever. How else can respond than to rejoice in our coming Savior? Amen.