

Mary and Her Magnificat Luke 1:26-38, 46-56

The church taken as a whole has said a lot about Mary. If some have said too much, Protestants perhaps have said too little. What we need to do is get back to what Mary said. If anyone understood Christmas, Mary did. It's likely that Luke interviewed her, but regardless her eyewitness testimony shapes this story (Lk. 1:1-4). Let Mary teach us how to get ready for Christmas.

Demo Before Remodel

Of the four doctrines of Mariology, three of them are false: immaculate conception, assumption, and perpetual virginity. Mary was a sinner (v47). We have no scriptural record of her being taken to heaven nor any evidence that anyone believed this before the fourth century. It only became infallible Roman Catholic dogma in 1950 when Pius XII declared it. Mary was a virgin until after Jesus was born, but then she had four boys and at least two girls (Matt. 1:25, 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). We do acknowledge the scriptural truth that she bore God in her womb and is therefore *theotokos*, bearer of God, but keep your feet (Ex. 20:4-6; Acts 10:25).

The Lowliness of Mary

Mary was from a small and unimportant town (v26). She is *troubled* by the announcement of her blessedness (vv28-29). God doesn't send Gabriel to Jerusalem to pick Caiaphas' daughter, but to Joachim and Anna's in the boonies. Her barren relative Elizabeth is married to an old Levite (1:7,18, 36). She was probably between thirteen and fifteen years old. Miriam means "bitter", reminiscent of Naomi when she renamed herself "Mara" (Ruth 1:20). Mary also reminds us of Miriam, Moses' sister who also lived in a bitter time when Israel was enslaved in Egypt. She hid her baby brother Moses by the side of the river, saw Pharaoh's daughter find him and offered to get her a Hebrew nurse (Ex. 2:1-10). She craftily saved the leader of the exodus. She was a prophetess and sang the glorious song "the horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (Mic. 6:4; Ex. 15:20-21; cf. Handel). Mary sings a greater song about a greater exodus. By contrast, Miriam opposed Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12) whereas Mary accepted the Lord's choice of servant (v38).

The Exaltation of Mary

Among the disciples and their associates, Mary is a unique character. She fundamentally gets it and believes what Gabriel says (v45). God saw her humble state, but he exalted and blessed her (v48). Mary does not ascend to divinity or acquire omniscience. She is absent during most of the gospel narratives, and she doesn't always get what Jesus is doing (Mk. 3:31-35). But she usually does and seemingly better than anyone else (Lk. 2:19; Jn. 2:5). Why was *she* exalted? Why her? This song is why. Mary has spent her young life loving God and meditating on Scripture. She doesn't just know the Bible; she understands and loves it. There are dozens of references and allusions in the song, notably to the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10), but also to Job, numerous Psalms, Isaiah, and to the promises to Abraham in Genesis (12, 17, 22). As much as someone could be ready for this kind of call, Mary was.

The Faith & Faithfulness of Mary

Mary knows she hasn't been with a man, so she asks how this can be (v34). She looked at her likely divorce (Matt. 1:19), single parenting, and soon the sword piercing her soul (Lk. 2:33-35) and saw all generations calling her blessed (v48). She saw the mercy of God spanning generation to generation, the proud brought low, wicked rulers dethroned, the hungry fed and God's promises fulfilled to Abraham and his offspring forever (vv50-55). The most blessed among women shows us what faith in Jesus Christ means.

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Luke 1:26-30, 38, 46-55 *26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. 46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

1. What city was Mary from, and who was she betrothed (which means engaged to be married) to (verses 26-27)?
2. The angel Gabriel calls Mary "favored one" (verses 28, 30). "Favor" means grace, God's unearned kindness. What gift or grace did Mary receive from God?
3. Mary was engaged to be married but then became pregnant by the Holy Spirit before she was married. Joseph would think that Mary became pregnant by being unfaithful to him. Mary was blessed but she had to trust God to provide and protect her and the baby. What does she say when she learns this (verse 38)?
4. Mary's song or poem is called her Magnificat ("mag ni fi caught") founded in verses 46-55. She speaks of all the things God will do through Jesus. Draw a few of those things below.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

*For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. -Luke 1:48-49*