

# The Magnificat

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2010

## Intro

- In one sense, there appears to be no greater call on this earth perhaps than to be the chosen vessel through whom God would be born as a human being. Mary was indeed blessed by God in this calling, and at this Christmas season we recall the wonder of it.
- However, years later, when a woman from the crowd cried out to Jesus "...Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." (Lk 11:27, NASB) Jesus replied with something quite profound: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it' (Luk 11:28, NIV). This gives us something to aspire to, as there will never be a need for another earthly mother for Jesus.
- Mary indeed fulfilled her calling to be the mother of Jesus, and now the baton is with us. How are we going to fulfill our calling and obey the word of God in our lives? In Gal 4:19 Paul says to the Galatians 'Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. ' (NLT). It is an incredible picture which helps us in some ways to identify with Mary's call. It's a strange thought that Christ is being formed in our lives, but this is a picture of ongoing sanctification- seeing us becoming more Christlike each day. It is the process of making our true righteous standing before God the Father become a reality in our daily lives. We are living epistles of Christ (2Cor 3:2-3).
- This morning, as we think about the Christmas story, we will look at some of Mary's characteristics which she developed in her life which helped her to fulfil her calling in God. We will look specifically at The **Magnificat** (Latin: [My soul] magnifies), which is the song Mary spontaneously sang when she realised the awesome calling of God on her life. Do you realise that there is an awesome calling on your life, should you choose to accept it?

## Read Luke 1:26-56

Attributes we see in Mary that we also need to adopt to fulfill our calling in God:

### A spirit of praise- v46-47

- Soul & Spirit used in Hebrew parallelism here- the 2 lines say the same thing in a different way. It means that despite whatever happens outwardly to her, on the inside she chooses to cultivate a thankful attitude to God. Are we?
- Mary had plenty of things that she would have to go through:
  1. First there was the shame of people's perception that she was pregnant out of wedlock. This was the time of testing in her engagement where according to Hebrew practise both parties were to prove their fidelity. It is in the middle of this tension between the truth and other people's perceptions of the truth that she breaks out into praise to God.
  2. Then there was the hassles surrounding the birth. The necessity of having to travel to Bethlehem on the back of a donkey whilst 9 months pregnant, and then spending the night in a stinking cattle shed and going into labour there and having to have Josph as a midwife.
  3. There was the hardships of poverty, as seen by the fact that Josph and Mary could only afford the sacrifice of the poor at the purification ceremony for Mary in

the temple after she gave birth (Luke 2 :22-24, see Lev 12:8)

4. Then there was the attempts of Herod to kill her son, causing them to have to flee to Egypt.

5. At some point (we are not told) Joseph died. They were already poor before this.

6. Later there was the concern later in their Son's ministry that He had lost His mind.

7. Finally there was the pain of witnessing her Son crucified.

In all these situations, it would be the choice of cultivating that spirit of praise which would be a key to walking through to victory. What situations are we presently going through that are tempting us to be anything but thankful? Despite going through these things are we cultivating that same spirit of worship and praise that Mary did? Depression is a prison that seeks to lock us up, but one of the keys out is a spirit of worship. It is choosing to take off the spirit of heaviness and put on the garment of praise instead (Is 61:3) that will give us the strength to continue. We are reminded that the 'joy of the Lord is our strength' (Neh 8:10). It starts with a choice, a decision, but after a time the emotions also follow.

- 'My spirit has rejoiced in God my saviour'- Mary knew the reality of the joy of her salvation, not just salvation as a general concept, but her salvation- it was personal to her. This is a solid foundation when the storms of life come against us; that nothing can compare to the joy that God has qualified us to share in the glories of Heaven. That all our sins are washed away. That we are righteous in Him. David knew the blessedness of a realisation that the slate is wiped clean when he said 'Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit'. However, later he did try to sin (adultery and murder) and cover it up. When found out he became depressed, but then asked God to restore to him the 'joy of his salvation' (Psalm 51:12). Do we need to ask God the same? Is the joy of our salvation fresh each day, or do we need to remind ourselves of how blessed we really are? Do we need to be honest with God and spill the beans receiving His forgiveness and joy?
- This thankfulness for the grace of God released in Mary a spontaneous flow of the prophetic. She suddenly became a psalmist like David. As we cultivate thankfulness to God it will release creativity in us, and the prophetic flow of the Spirit.
- **Application-** One of our key vision areas as a Church is that of worship- we are to raise a highly visible banner of true praise and worship here in Brynmawr, at the heads of the valleys. We are to be known for worship that is spontaneous, creative and free just like this 'magnificat'. To do that we need to cultivate thankful spirits before God, just as Mary did.

### **A willingness to serve- v48-53**

- Mary's sole desire was to 'magnify the Lord' (v 46). This meant God getting the glory, God increasing and her decreasing (the same spirit that John the Baptist displayed when he said 'He must increase, I must decrease'- John 3:30).
- Mary observed rightly that God gives grace to the humble, but opposes the proud (verses 48-53).
- Mary was well aware of the privilege she had been given- it was all of God's grace that she was able to serve Him in this way. Sometimes we can start a job all excited in this manner, and willing to serve, but after a period of time it becomes a chore and we can despise serving. God rescued the people of Israel out of Egypt so that they could be God's own special people, His treasured possession. However, soon they began to grumble in the wilderness when things didn't pan out as they expected, and the result was that a whole generation missed their window of

opportunity to serve God. We have an amazing 'window of opportunity' to serve God faithfully in our generation. It will not remain open forever, but for 'such a time as this' we have the privilege of being chosen to be used in His kingdom. Let's embrace the opportunity with both arms just as Mary did as soon as the angel Gabriel spoke to her.

- **Application-** 'Whatever it takes, I'll do it' mentality before God. Mary willing to go through the muck of the stable to see the glory revealed, are we? Part of our vision is to release people into ministry- that means a family of people with the heart to serve God and others. Mary called herself the 'maidservant of the Lord' (v38, 48). Let's not be afraid to be identified and also seen as servants of our God.

### **A desire to see God's Word fulfilled- v54-55**

- Mary was well acquainted with the word of God, she knew the promises of God and was holding onto them, eagerly awaiting their fulfillment and in faith for it. She had read about the promises given to Abraham of a chosen seed (Galatians 3:16 ('one seed=Christ') Galatians 3:27-29; (n.b. In the following verses the original has the singular word 'seed' rather than the plural word 'descendants') Gen 12:7; Gen 13:15-16; Gen 15:5; Gen 12:7; Gen 13:15-16; Gen 15:5; Gen 15:13; Gen 15:18; Gen 17:8-10; Gen 21:12; Gen 22:17-18; Gen 24:7) that would be their salvation and blessing, the seed of the woman who would crush the serpents head (Genesis 3:15, again uses the word 'seed').
- Faith comes by hearing the word of God we are told in Rom 10:17. We are saved when we realise the message of the gospel which the Bible contains. The Bible is packed with promises to us as believers. As we read it and mull it over faith is released to us concerning the promises of God. We live in the age of the gospel- Jesus promised the gospel would go to all nations (Mt 24:14; Mt 28:19; Rev 5:9; Rev 14:6; Ps 2:8). Jesus would not command something of us that He hasn't given us the power to fulfil (in fact He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth and commissions us to go in that delegated authority Mt 28:18-19).
- **Application-** Hold onto the vision. The promises of God given to Abraham were now finally being fulfilled 2000 years later, but they were as true when they were given as when they were fulfilled. We live in an instant gratification culture which is not used to waiting for things, but fruit takes time to grow. If we remain focussed and continue to put into practise what God says then we will reap a great harvest. The encouragement that Andy & Liz gave us- we are doing really well, just need to keep our strength up for the next phase.

### **Summary**

- A spirit of praise- raise a banner of praise here
- A willingness to serve- whatever it takes, I'll do it
- A desire to see God's Word fulfilled- hold onto the vision

**Song:** *Change my heart O God*