

Christmas 2021

Text

Luke 1:46-55

Topic

Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth, and shares the wonderful news of her pregnancy in a song

Title

"Lady Sings the News"

***Jesus Refulsit Omnium
Corde Natus ex Parentis
Adeste Fideles***

It isn't tongues... I don't have a brain tumor... It's not from Parkinson's.

These are not spells from Harry Potter. I'm not making fun of President Biden.

They are the Latin titles for what music historians consider the oldest Christmas hymns:

- *Jesus Refulsit Omnium* translates to, *Jesus, Light of All the Nations*, written by St. Hilary of Poitiers in the 4th century.
- *Corde Natus ex Parentis* translates to, *Of the Father's Love Begotten*. Christian poet Prudentius wrote the poem that inspired this song in the 4th century.
- *Adeste Fideles* is the familiar, *O Come, All Ye Faithful*, from 1841.

Away in a Manger, Silent Night, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing... These are probably what come to mind when you think about traditional Christmas carols. As classic as these songs are, they're not old.

There is in the Bible the overlooked oldest of the hymns of Christ's birth.

You might know it by its Latin name, *Magnificat*.

It is found in only one place, in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The *Magnificat* is one of four hymns recorded by Luke in response to the birth of Christ. The other three are:

1. Zechariah's *Benedictus* (1:67-79).
2. The angels' *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (2:13-14).
3. Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (2:28-32).

Luke presented Christmas as a musical; or at least having its own score.

Christmas is a time for song. I feel sorry for those who refuse to celebrate for one reason or another. They miss out on so much praise.

BTW: Have you been told that our celebration of Christmas has pagan roots? There is historical evidence that the opposite is true. One historian wrote,

The pagan festival of the "Birth of the Unconquered Sun" instituted by the Roman Emperor Aurelian on 25 December 274, was almost certainly an attempt to create a pagan alternative to a date that was already of some significance to Roman Christians. Thus the "pagan origins of Christmas" is a myth without historical substance.

<http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-10-012-v#continue>

Or Google Calculating Christmas.

We don't want to ruin the *Magnificat* by picking it apart. Happily, it suggests it's own three movements:

1. In verses 46-49, God's calling upon her life draws praise from Mary.
2. In verses 50-53, Mary sings about the Messiah transforming the world.
3. In verses 54-55, Mary's song finds its crescendo in God's trustworthy promises and prophecies.

Let's set the scene within which this song was sung. Finding herself pregnant after the angel Gabriel's visit, Mary went to see her cousin, Elizabeth, to see if Elizabeth was also pregnant like the angel had said. Elizabeth was visibly pregnant, being six months along in her pregnancy with John the Baptist. He went full Pentecostal, leaping inside her womb when Mary arrived. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth spoke a blessing over Mary.

Mary began to sing:

Luk 1:46 "My soul magnifies the Lord,

Luk 1:47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

Luk 1:48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

Luk 1:49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.

Magnificat is Latin for "magnify." In her case, Mary magnified God by rejoicing in Him.

The Doctrine of the Virgin Birth is implied in the Old Testament. It wasn't revealed until later on, in the New Testament. No one in Israel was anticipating a miraculous virgin birth. The Jewish leaders would accuse Jesus of being illegitimate.

Mary was a young, betrothed girl, pregnant out of wedlock. Her condition was considered shameful socially and morally.

Mary chose to believe God and rejoice.

Do you believe God? Then choose to rejoice in your circumstances.

We applaud the person whose human spirit cannot be broken. William Wallace yelling, "Freedom," while being disemboweled gets Mel Gibson an Academy Award. Why do the smallest things rob our joy as believers? Why does anything?

You'll notice that Mary sang about things in the past tense as if they had already occurred. Scholars call this the 'prophetic past-tense,' meaning it hasn't happened but it most certainly will because God has prophesied it.

Mary was 15 years old, maybe 16 tops. God has a habit of calling upon youth:

- David was the youngest in his family, just a youth, when he slew the Philistine giant.
- Daniel and his three friends were youths when taken captive to Babylon.
- Jeremiah is thought to have been 17 years old when God called him.

A godly young man or woman, boy or girl, has the same Holy Spirit in them as an adult. God wants to use young people.

Mary was no theologian. Her song was spontaneous and inspired. She sang it with joy for an audience of three - two of whom were in utero.

There are two ways we can approach Mary's song:

1. We can approach it *intellectually* by looking at its various parts.
2. We can approach it *devotionally* by taking it as a whole.

We are going devotional. Our understanding of 'devotional' is discovering what the Bible says to us without taking it out of its original context.

Looking at the *Magnificat* devotionally, we can say that it describes every servant God calls.

Mary's service was unique in the Christian story, sure. There are a lot of saints like that, whose names are known for a unique part they played.

You are an unknown. To people, that is, not to God. But you are no less loved or blessed than Mary or any other servant. It is impossible for Jesus to love one servant more than another.

"My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

Is God your Savior? If not, receive Him - right now!

Jesus is the Savior of the whole world, especially those who believe.

- "Spirit" refers to the immaterial part of humanity that connects with God.
- Human beings *are* souls. In its most basic sense, the word *soul* means "life." It has been called the "life essence of the body."

Humans are born spiritually dead, with souls blackened by sin. Believe Jesus and you are born again, born spiritually. You receive a new nature, and the Holy Spirit.

"For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed."

A paraphrase of these words is, "God took one good look at me, and look what happened - I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten."

God took one look at you. You were dressed in filthy garments. You were born with a sin nature and you were a sinner. There was nothing about you to commend you to God.

Mary looked just like that, too. There was nothing holy about her, nothing to set her apart.

You were just what He was looking for, to save and transform, to perfect you to meet the Father as His bride.

"All generations will call me blessed" doesn't only apply to Mary:

- Think of all the Bible's hero's and heroines whose names are upon our lips.
- Think of all the 'famous' Christians not in the Bible we called blessed.

You are no less blessed, though you work in obscurity, no one ever knowing your name. (You might be better off).

"For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy *is* His name."

Our God is "holy," which in part means that on account of His perfection, He can do nothing wrong or evil. We can therefore trust that "great things" are happening in our lives as we walk with Him.

I admit sometimes I apply this wrongly by thinking, "That's just great, Lord." We don't always recognize all things working together for our good, but we know they are because God is almighty and He loves us.

A new movement in the song begins in verse fifty:

Luk 1:50 And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him From generation to generation.

From "generation to generation," God oversees history. He has the watch. He acts providentially to fulfill His promises and push forward His agenda of redeeming the human race and His ruined Creation. No matter how much the plan of redemption seems to be in jeopardy, believers in every generation, "those who fear Him," experience God's mercy.

Luk 1:51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Luk 1:52 He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones, And exalted *the* lowly.

Luk 1:53 He has filled *the* hungry with good things, And *the* rich He has sent away empty.

Throughout history there are "proud," "mighty," and "rich" individuals who hold earthly power. They always seem to be winning. They are not. Time after time, God has "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Think of Pharaoh and Moses and you get the idea.

The reversals listed herald the changes to come in the future Kingdom of God on Earth.

Satan is the current ruler of this world. At one point in history he had a throne in the city of Pergamum. God had a church there. Believers may be "lowly" and "hungry," but the church cannot fail.

I should rephrase that and say, "believers *will* be lowly and hungry (in need)." The Church Age in which we find ourselves is a time when we magnify the Lord in our weaknesses and sufferings. The apostle Paul wrote,

2Co 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

2Co 12:8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

2Co 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2Co 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God can and does heal. Healings are few and far between, if we are honest.

- Either the church is failing, as many suggest.
- Or we are living in a time during which having a thorn in the flesh is more a testimony than healing it would be.

The final movement of the *Magnificat* is about Mary's people, the nation of Israel:

Luk 1:54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of *His* mercy,
Luk 1:55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

God determined to call out a special people for Himself, and through that special people He would bless the whole world with the Messiah. He chose Abram to be the father of that new people, the nation of Israel. He would later change Abram’s name to Abraham.

God’s unconditional promise included land. It was a specific land, an actual property, with dimensions specified, to be Israel’s forever.

Joel Richardson writes, “Among the most critical matters of urgency for the church in this hour is acquiring a biblical view of Israel. Exposing the spreading cancer of anti-Semitism, arrogance, and misinformation within the Body of Christ is one of the most important challenges of our day.”

If anyone deserved to be abandoned by God, it was Israel. Their history is full of rebellion and idolatry. God continually “helped” Israel, calling them His “servant.”

We serve an incredible Promise Keeper. If He has begun a work in you, He will complete it - despite your efforts to go your own way.

Think of your life as a musical, e.g., *PG the Musical*.

What is the audience experience as folks watch your musical? What is your score on Rotten Tomatoes? Because you can be sure people are watching.

Here’s a better way of thinking about it. Each of us, as believers in Christ, are writing our musical. Our thoughts, our actions, our decisions, all contribute to it.

Mary’s song was a *Magnificat*. Our song, our musical, can likewise be a *Magnificat* as we choose rejoicing.