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Sermon Notes

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Mary Magnifies Her Savior, Her Son

Luke 1:46-55

Introduction

Concerted Move to make Christ SMALLER... to make Him disappear entirely

I. Let Us Magnify the Lord Together

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

Psalm 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

A. The Essence of Christian Worship

1. To Magnify the Lord
2. "Magnify" = "to make larger or greater"
3. An ancient mystery... how can a mortal man "magnify" the immense and eternal God?

Illus. A telescope does not make the Polar Star any larger in actuality, but it magnifies it in how it APPEARS to the astronomer

So it is with magnifying the Lord... He does not change in Himself, but only becomes GREATER in our estimation

When Mary's mind and heart were filled with the truths of God's astonishing plans for her and for the whole world, she was overwhelmed with His greatness... The Lord did not actually become greater, but He appeared infinitely greater to her

As she meditated on the Lord and His character and His power and His might... she was overwhelmed with His greatness

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

When she spoke her praise, she wanted Elizabeth to magnify the Lord with her

Psalm 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

4. This is the essence of Christian worship... to MAGNIFY the Lord together
- the world makes little of God... it wants to shrink Him and minimize Him and reduce Him and erase Him
- our secular society would like to eradicate any mention of Christ at all... we can get along fine without Him, so we think...
- so we seek to strike the line "Under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance
- so we seek to remove the phrase "In God we trust" from our currency
- so we seek to make it illegal for godly public school teachers even to mention the name of God or of His Christ
- meanwhile our popular culture also seeks to shrink Him and minimize Him and reduce Him and erase Him
- BUT it is the Christian's joy and duty in worship to MAGNIFY the Lord and to REJOICE in God our Savior!!!
- We do this by thinking much about Him... by reading His word carefully, savoring each phrase... by treasuring up His promises like rare jewels... and by speaking His greatness to each other in prayer, in conversation, in preaching and teaching, in singing and in joy.

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

Psalm 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

B. The Essence of a Worshipful Christmas

1. Christmas is becoming increasingly SECULAR
2. The overwhelming emphasis on materialism has always stood as a threat to a worshipful Christ-centered Christmas
3. But now our popular cultural expressions of the birth of Christ seek to omit Him altogether
4. Christian families: have to fight this secularizing trend... we have to FOCUS on Christ and on the true significance of His birth
5. The key to a worshipful Christmas is this:

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

This morning our goal is to follow Mary's sweet meditation on the glory of God her Savior

- We desire to magnify the Lord and exalt His name together for sending the infant Jesus to be miraculously crafted inside her body
- We desire to stand in awe and wonder at the miracle of Christmas... of God made man, of the incarnation, of the virgin conception and birth of our beautiful savior
- We meditate together on one of the great pieces of poetry in the Bible, the "Magificat" of Mary

II. The Context of Mary's Praise

A. At What Point of Redemptive History?

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

1. The Jewish Nation: dominated for six centuries by Gentile emperors
it was the "Times of the Gentiles"
2. Roman soldiers tramped through the Judean countryside, taking the best of the harvest and produce for themselves

3. Puppet kings like Herod ruled under Rome, and the threat of the Roman legions was never far
4. Furthermore, there had been NO PROPHETIC WORD since the days of Malachi
5. Some Jews were certainly ready to give up on the promises made to Abraham... they had been slaves in their own Promised Land for six hundred years

Psalm 77:7-9 "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? ⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? ⁹ Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"

B. Who Was Mary?

1. Jewish young woman; descendent of David
2. Of humble circumstances... from a poor family, living in Galilee, a despised area of Judea, dominated and permeated by Gentile influence
3. Sister of Salome; aunt to James and John
4. Betrothed to Joseph... a godly man, but hardly wealthy
5. Virgin
6. Godly character
7. Highly esteemed by heaven!!!

C. Elizabeth's Extraordinary News: The Birth of John the Baptist, (Luke 1:5-24)

D. Mary's Extraordinary News: The Birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-38)

1. Gabriel's visit: the same angel who had appeared to Daniel five centuries before in Babylon
2. Gabriel's news

you're going to have a son!!... your Son will be the Messiah

your Son will also be God's Son... He will be God in the flesh

your Son's Kingdom will never end

3. Mary's stunned response

"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

4. Gabriel's explanation

vs. 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Thus the mystery of the incarnation: Christ fully man (reigning on the throne of "His father, David", born of his mother, Mary)... Christ also fully God ("so the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God")

5. Gabriel's confirming proof: Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy

6. Gabriel's resounding affirmation

For nothing is impossible with God."

7. Mary's submissive, faith-filled answer

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

E. Mary's Expectant Visit

The angel's news of Elizabeth's amazing situation was an open door for Mary to confirm the angel's word... for this very reason, Mary immediately travels to the hill country to see Elizabeth and confirm what the angel has said... and the whole time she traveled, Gabriel's words must have been ringing in her ears

F. Elizabeth's Prophetic Praise

Luke 1:42-45 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the

baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

III. The Characteristics of Mary's Praise

A. Depth

Mary is a quiet ponderer, a very deep thinker

Several times in the next chapter, it is said of Mary that she pondered these things in her heart

Mary's praise is deep and rich, and shows amazing understanding of the significance of Christ's birth

B. Joy

The whole tone of Mary's praise is joyful celebration with deep awe and reverence

She sets the tone immediately with her first words

Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

C. God-Centered Adoration

1. God's attributes are on display throughout Mary's praise

Divine power.... Holiness... Mercy... Faithfulness

2. Throughout the Praise, Mary keeps her mind focused like a laser on who God is and what He is doing

D. Scriptural Knowledge

1. Some say Mary's praise is based on Hannah's praise after the birth of Samuel
2. However, there are only a few points of contact... and Hannah's praise is more focused on personal vindication over her enemy
3. Actually, Mary's praise is saturated in Scripture throughout... some scholars have found allusions or quotations of over twenty different Old Testament scriptures in these few verses from Mary

4. What a perfect mother for Jesus, who would Himself be more saturated with Scripture than any man who ever lived

E. Humility

1. Mary is astonished that God would be so gracious to her
2. Mary recognizes her low and humble estate... and that is what makes her praise so high and rich
3. More on this in a moment

IV. The Content of Mary's Praise

A. Stanza 1: Exulting in God's Blessings to Her (vs. 46-49)

vs. 46-49 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name.

1. Mary's joy: flows as a result of Elizabeth's presence and statements
 - a. very quiet before the angel Gabriel... very submissive and reflective
 - b. very open here with another woman in similar circumstance
 - c. Elizabeth's outburst is passionate and energetic
 - d. Mary's praise seems more regal and majestic
2. Focus of this stanza: Exulting in God's Blessings to Her (personally)
 - a. religion all begins here... with the individual sinner and his/her creator
 - b. "Is there room at the cross for ME?"
 - c. there will be a wedding banquet... but will I have a seat there?
 - d. Paul's statement

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

3. Mary's astonishment rooted in humility: Why should the Almighty One elevate me so highly???

he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

- a. Mary recognized her low position: a member of a conquered Jewish race
- b. perhaps especially humbled... maybe her family unusually poor or despised in some way
- c. future prospects also humble... Joseph merely a tradesman, a humble town carpenter; hardly the possibility of prominence

4. Mary's Savior

vs. 46-47 "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

- a. this statement should forever lay to rest any sense of Mary's sinlessness or perfection
- b. Roman Catholic doctrine: Immaculate Conception, Sinlessness of Mary, "Mediatix"... nowhere taught in scripture!

Roman Catholic teaching goes so far as to call Mary a "second Eve," and to ascribe to her the status of co-redemptrix with Christ and presently reigning as "Queen of heaven and earth."

- c. HOWEVER, Mary herself recognized her need for a savior

vs. 46-47 "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

The "humble state" of Mary included her need for a Savior from sin... and she knew it and acknowledged it!!

Mary was a godly woman, who loved God with all her heart and who was willing to believe what the angel told her

She would suffer greatly for taking this role in life

She was in every respect a woman worthy of emulation by all generations of woman to follow

BUT she needed a Savior, and God was providing one through her own son, Jesus Christ!!

Astonishing thought! God her Savior would also be Jesus her Son!!

5. Mary's recognition of future blessing:

From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me.

- a. Mary knew that this gift would be of eternal consequence
- b. for that reason, from then all future generations would call her blessed... they would see the special role God gave her by His grace

6. God's Great Gifts to Mary

for the Mighty One has done great things for me.

- a. angelic visit
- b. virgin conception... an incredible miracle

Ordinary conception: 46 chromosomes in normal birth; 23 from the mother, 23 from the father. In this case, God supernaturally created the necessary missing chromosomes in the same way that He spoke the universe into existence... "By the word of His power."

It's the same way Jesus created a new ear for Malchus after Peter chopped it off the night He was arrested

- c. fulfillment of prophecies made hundreds of years before her

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

- d. astonishing role of raising the Savior of the world
- e. best of all: salvation for herself from her own sins

7. The Holiness of God

“Holy is His name!”

- a. holiness is the distinguishing characteristic of the God of the Bible
- b. what will happen to Mary could lead some to think of uncleanness... the rumor mill will be spinning and Mary will be the brunt of these rumors
- c. John 8: Jews accused Jesus of being a Samaritan and demon-possessed... earlier they insinuated that He was illegitimate
- d. BUT the whole conception and birth was perfectly holy, because God’s name is holy

Luke 1:34-35 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

B. Stanza 2: Extending to God’s Blessings from Generation to Generation (vs. 50)

vs. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

1. Mary now widens her focus and praise to include generations yet unborn
2. This is the nature of true Christian faith... it begins with one’s own relationship with God, and soon extends to include other believers even to the end of time!!
3. Probably came from understanding Gabriel’s prediction concerning the future of her Son’s Kingdom

Luke 1:32-33 The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.

4. God’s mercy is the true focus

Mercy = God’s lovingkindness and blessing given to those in suffering and in misery

No earthly suffering compares with that of the damned in hell... however great is the suffering of people in the slums of Calcutta, or the AIDS wards in Botswana, or the forced labor concentration camps of North Korea... and their suffering IS great, it pales in comparison with the sufferings in the Lake of Fire

This is the predominant mercy the Lord has shown... in sending Christ to take the death penalty for our sins

God is merciful in saving us from sin... and it is a GREAT MERCY

However, this mercy is NOT for everyone, but only for those who fear Him

C. Stanza 3: Delighting in God's Surprising Ways with the Full and Empty (vs. 51-53)

vs. 51-53 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

1. Having covered God's mercy to those who fear Him, Mary now turns to the "Great Reversal"
2. The world reveres wealth, power, prestige, conquest, domination, ostentation...
3. But God opposes the proud... He takes great delight in thwarting their ambitions

James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

This is the GREAT REVERSAL

4. Mary speaks of the "Mighty deeds" God has done with His arm
 - a. the Exodus... the TEN PLAGUES, the Red Sea
 - b. Jews suffering under Gentile tyrants would be crying out for a renewal of those days again
 - c. even worse, however, is the tyranny of sin... of Satan and his wicked kingdom... this is the tyranny Christ came to destroy
5. Mary speaks of God's opposition to the proud... IN THEIR INMOST THOUGHTS

6. He speaks of God bringing down tyrants from their mighty thrones... perhaps two would come to mind right away... Herod the Great and Caesar Augustus

These two rulers were rejected by God... God sent not His Son to them, but to a humble Jewish peasant girl... this is the great Reversal

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

Basic concept: God is sovereign over rulers... He raises one and lowers another; but His grace He gives to the humble

7. God's Banquet Table: Spread for the Hungry

vs. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

- a. God spreads a banquet table and invites the hungry to come

Isaiah 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

God's FEAST is the Kingdom of Messiah... it is a rich welcome into the Kingdom of God

God's FEAST is essentially spiritual in this world... forgiveness of sins

- b. basic principle: the spiritually hungry will sit and eat; those satisfied in this world will not

Imagine: Someone who brought their own lunch to the Galilean hill where Jesus fed the 5000; he would miss the feast;

Someone who brought His own fine wine to the wedding at Cana in Galilee where Jesus turned the water into wine... he would refuse Jesus' provision because he had his own

Someone who felt he was perfectly righteous and pleasing to God, sure didn't need Jesus to be their Savior

Those who were desperate for forgiveness, hungry and thirsty for righteousness and salvation, he satisfied

But those who were satisfied with themselves... with their earthly wealth, their earthly comforts, their earthly situations... he sent them away empty

D. Stanza 4: Celebrating God's Faithfulness to His Covenant with Abraham (vs. 54-55)

1. Final stanza of special interest to Mary as a descendent of Abraham
2. Mary knew well the promises made to Abraham, their forefather

Genesis 12:2-3 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

3. HOWEVER: For six hundred years, Gentiles had trampled the Promised Land and the Holy City
4. Gabriel's message to Mary, and Elizabeth's Spirit-filled utterance are more proof: GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM!!!!

Luke 1:54-55 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

The word "servant" can be translated "boy", and it highlights Israel's weakness and frailty and dependence on God...

Mary here celebrates God's renewal of His covenant promises to Abraham... the time has come at last for God to be gracious

Summary: This is a detailed look at the content of Mary's Praise... in four stanzas, celebrating

- 1) God's mercy and grace to Mary personally
- 2) God's mercy and grace to all generations of those who fear Him
- 3) God's GREAT REVERSAL: opposing the rich and proud and powerful, and elevating the poor and needy
- 4) God's faithfulness to His covenant promises made to Abraham

V. The Consummation of Mary's Praise

A. Mary's Son Was Her Savior

1. Astonishing Fact: Mary never mentions her Son!!
2. Yet, her praise was all focused on the gift of Christ
3. The amazing fact of all of this: Mary's own Son was the Savior of her soul

vs. 46-47 "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

B. Mary's Praise Was Merely Foretaste

1. In many respects, an Old Testament praise... awaiting the consummation of history
2. Christ had not yet been born, and Mary did not know what would come
3. Mary's understanding here was limited... but by the end of her life she would know
4. Jesus came to die... and in His death her sins would be atoned for
5. Mary's praise would only reach it's fullest consummation in heaven
6. There she would worship her son perfectly for eternity

C. Mary's Highest Position: Not as Christ's Mother but as Christ's Disciple

Luke 11:27-28 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." ²⁸ He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Mary's joy here awaited a final consummation: her own salvation and that of all the people of God

Luke 10:20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

VI. Application: Magnifying Christ at Christmas

1. Worship Christ Joyfully, Like Mary

Magnify Christ... focus on Christ... exalt Christ... resist the secularizing trend; **BE JOYFUL!!!**

2. Understand True Wealth: God's Grace

The wealthy get sent away empty... it is **HARD** for a rich man to enter the Kingdom; the true wealth is grace

3. Honor Mary's Faith, But Don't Worship Her

4. Personalize Christmas: "Christ Came for Me"

5. Universalize Christmas: "Christ Came for Us"

On the other hand, understand God is working all over the world and across generations building a Kingdom

6. Marvel at God's Sovereign Rule of History

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

7. Understand the "Great Reversal": God Opposes the Proud, But Gives Grace to the Humble

Forever, Christ came to save spiritual beggars, not arrogant people who feel they have no needs

8. Rely on God's Faithfulness to His Promises

The whole issue of God's covenant promises to Abraham is that is exactly how we Gentiles get saved; if God hadn't kept His promise to Abraham's children, why would you think He would keep His promises to you; but if God is **FAITHFUL** to His promises, God will raise you from the dead if you trust in Christ!