

Luke 1: 39-49 (ESV) – Mary’s Magnificat

Main point: Make God large in your view!

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.



Background: This is the first of four ancient “advent hymns” from Luke’s gospel story of Jesus’ birth, according to Christian tradition:

1. Mary’s Magnificat
2. Zechariah’s blessing after the birth of his son, John the Baptist
3. the Angels’ “Gloria in excelsis”
4. Song of Simeon

Before we look at Mary’s hymn, or song, let’s imagine her situation. What are some of Mary’s circumstances right now?

- *Is she a mature, well-established lady?*
 - No; scholars think she was probably about 13-14 years old.
- *Is she married?*
 - No; engaged but not married.
- *Is she rich?*
 - No; from a poor area of low reputation (Nazareth).
- *And of course, her most pressing situation??* She’s pregnant.

But the angel tells her to not be afraid; she has been chosen and blessed. The angel also says:

⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Mary accepts the message; I wonder who here knows what Mary said? What is Mary’s attitude?

- v. 38: “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”
- She submits to God’s will for her, even though she doesn’t know all the details.

Mary then goes “with haste” to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant, with the baby who will become John the Baptist. Let’s read what happens.

Focus of study:

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted [her cousin] Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

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.”

Questions:

1. *What happens when Mary goes to see her pregnant cousin Elizabeth?*
 - a. Elizabeth tells Mary that Elizabeth’s baby leaped when it heard Mary’s voice.
 - b. *Wow; I wonder why that happened?? What is Elizabeth “filled with,” and what might that mean?*
 - i. Elizabeth is speaking “in spirit,” with inspiration – she realizes through the Holy Spirit that something very special is happening with Mary and Mary’s baby.
 - c. Elizabeth makes a point to “bless” Mary. *What do you think that felt like to Mary, to have Elizabeth give her a blessing? (Remember Mary’s circumstances...)*
2. *Mary’s response is to burst into song. She starts with: “My soul magnifies the Lord” – what does “magnify” mean?*
 - a. to make large, make something big
 - b. to bring into focus, like a magnifying glass [*Have a magnifying glass on hand if possible and use it to show the difference between seeing something small and large, or seeing something fuzzy versus in focus.*]
3. *What else does Mary do?*
 - a. v. 47: she rejoices in God
4. *Why does Mary magnify God and rejoice in God?*
 - a. v. 48: “God has looked on the humble estate of his servant” –*What does it mean that Mary is humble? What does it feel like to be humble?*
 - b. v. 48: *What promise does Mary have?*
 - i. “All generations will call me blessed...” *And what are we doing right now, today?!*
Still talking about Mary and how special she was!
5. *I wonder how you feel when you know God is with you?*
 - a. Loved, protected, amazed, glad, grateful ...
6. *Again: When you magnify something, what happens?*
 - a. It gets BIGGER.
7. *What happens to everything outside the magnifying glass?*
 - a. Everything else looks SMALLER.
8. *When you magnify the Lord, what does that do to all the worries or fears you may have in your life?*
 - a. As God gets bigger, other concerns get smaller.
9. *Remember Mary’s situation: humble, poor, a woman, unmarried, pregnant. What happened to those concerns when she magnified the Lord? Did they go away? (No.) Did they get smaller in her mind and heart so that they did not overwhelm her? (Yes!)*
10. *God cares about and loves you, and when you focus on him, other serious things look more manageable. Like Mary, God is with you!*
 - Ask for prayer requests for today.
 - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
 - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

Luke 1: 39-49

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