

Mary's Song : The Magnificat

Introductory Note

This dramatic reading was written to show how the announcement of a coming Saviour fit fully into the history and expectations of God's people, how the Lord Almighty is a God of justice who watches over the needy, and how this God will be manifest in Jesus.

Early on in his gospel, Luke is set on establishing just who is this figure of Jesus. The archangel Gabriel pays a personal visit to a young maiden in Nazareth, a town in the outlying region of Galilee. He addresses her with words of blessing and strong encouragement: "Greetings, favoured one. The Lord is with you." These are words not normally spoken to a lowly woman, let alone by an archangel. A most unusual event that does not follow the standard order of things is about to happen.

And the words which followed announced events that must have been unimaginable to her — and at the same time, most terrifying: "You will bear a son who will be called the Son of the Most High, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever." Only God could accomplish all this, and why God would have chosen her?

Mary is faithful and undaunted: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Her song of response strongly echoes the longings and hopes of the people of Israel throughout their history. It resonates through the words of Hannah, Leah, the Psalmist and Isaiah. It attests to God's faithfulness and the blessings they have received from his hand. The song also emphasizes the steadfast righteousness and mercy of God, who promises a kingdom of justice and compassion.

Mary's Song : The Magnificat

- A Gabriel, messenger of God
spoke to a virgin from Nazareth named Mary
and told her
- B "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son
and you will name him Jesus
- A He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High
and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David
- B He will reign over the house of Jacob forever
and of his kingdom there will be no end"
- A Mary said
- C "Here am I, the servant of the Lord
let it be with me according to your word"
- A Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea
where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth
- C When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting
the baby leaped in her womb
and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
- A In a loud voice she exclaimed
- B "Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the child you will bear!
- C Blessed is she who believed
that the promise made her by the LORD
- B would be fulfilled"
- A And Mary said
- C "My soul glorifies the Lord
- B and proclaims the greatness of the LORD
- C My spirit exults
- B and rejoices in God my Savior
- C for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant
From this day forward all generations will call me blessed
for the Mighty One
- B the Almighty
- C has done great things for me —
- B holy is his name
- C His faithful love extends to those who fear him
from generation to generation
- B from one age to the next
- C He has performed mighty deeds with his arm
- B he has routed the arrogant of heart

C He has pulled down rulers from their thrones
 B but has lifted up the lowly
 C He has filled the hungry with good things
 B but has sent the rich away empty
 C He has come to the help of his servant Israel
 fully mindful of his faithful love
 B according to the promise he made to our ancestors
 C fully mindful of his mercy to Abraham
 and to his descendants for ever”

A Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months
 and then returned home LUKE 1.31-56

[the heart and voice of Hannah]
 [place song here in evening worship format]

B Mary was blessed
 A For she believed
 that what the Lord had said to her would be fulfilled
 She spoke as with the heart and voice of Hannah
 and many of God’s people before her

B Hannah had prayed to the LORD in the bitterness of her soul
 that he remove the shame of her barrenness
 A And when God had blessed her
 she dedicated her son, Samuel, to the LORD, saying
 C “My heart exults in the LORD
 in my God is my strength lifted up
 There is no Holy One like the LORD
 indeed, there is none but you
 There is no Rock like our God
 A The bows of the mighty are broken
 but the feeble are now girded with strength
 C Those who were full are hiring themselves out for bread
 but the hungry need labour no more
 B the barren woman bears sevenfold
 but the mother of many is left desolate
 A The LORD makes poor and makes rich
 He brings low, he also exalts
 B He raises up the poor from the dust
 he lifts the needy from the ash heap
 to give them a place with princes and assign them a seat of honor”
 1 SAMUEL 2.1-8

[the heart and voice of Eliphaz]
[place song here in evening worship format]

- B Mary was blessed
A For she believed
that what the Lord had said to her would be fulfilled
She spoke as with the heart and voice of Eliphaz
and many of God's people before her
- B Eliphaz was Job's friend, who counseled him
after he received his great misfortune
saying
C "The works of God are great, past all reckoning
marvelous things without number
A He sends down rain to the earth, pours down water on the fields
C He sets on high those who are lowly
and those who mourn are lifted to safety
B The LORD frustrates the plans of the crafty
so that they cannot succeed in their intrigues
A But he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth
from the hand of the mighty.
C So the poor have hope
and injustice must shut its mouth" JOB 5.9-16

[the heart and voice of Leah]
[place song here in evening worship format]

- B Mary was blessed
A For she believed
that what the Lord had said to her would be fulfilled
B She spoke as with the heart and voice of Leah
the wife of Jacob
A and many of God's people before her
B Leah exclaimed at the birth of her son, Asher
saying
C "What happiness!
All women will call me blessed!" GENESIS 30.13

[the heart and voice of the Psalmist]
[place song here in evening worship format]

- B Mary was blessed
A For she believed
that what the Lord had said to her would be fulfilled
She spoke as with the heart and voice of the Psalmist
and many of God's people before her
- C "My soul praises God from my heart
let the humble hear and be glad
Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD
let us acclaim his name together PSALM 34.2, 3
'Holy is he, and mighty!'
You are a king who loves justice,
who insists on honesty, justice and virtue
as you have done for Jacob" PSALM 99.3,4
- A "Sing a new song to the LORD, for he has performed wonders
his right hand and his holy arm have scattered the enemies
and gained for him the victory" PSALM 98.1, 89.10
- B "When the LORD builds Zion anew, he will be seen in his glory
he will answer the prayer of the abandoned
and will not scorn their petitions
God leaned down from the heights of his sanctuary
has looked down from heaven to earth
to hear the sighing of the captive
and set free those condemned to die" PSALM 102.16-20
- C "He raises the poor from the dust
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to give them a place among princes
He lets the barren woman be seated at home
the happy mother of sons" PSALM 113.7-9
- B "He has fed the hungry to their hearts' content
filled the starving with good things" PSALM 107.9
- A "He remembers his covenant for ever
the promise he laid down for a thousand generations
the covenant he made with Abraham
the oath he swore to Isaac" PSALM 105.8,9

[the heart and voice of Isaiah]
[place song here in evening worship format]

- B Mary was blessed
A For she believed
that what the Lord had said to her would be fulfilled
She spoke as with the heart and voice of Isaiah
and many of God's people before her
- B Isaiah was a prophet of the LORD
who proclaimed God's might and justice
C "Yahweh is the everlasting God
his understanding is beyond fathoming
A He gives strength to the weary
B he strengthens the powerless
A Young men may grow tired and weary, the young stumble and fall
B but those who hope in Yahweh will regain their strength" ISAIAH 40.28-30
- B "For thus says the High and Exalted One whose name is holy
C 'I live in a high and holy place
but I am also with the contrite and humble
A to revive the spirit of the humble
B to revive the heart of the contrite" ISAIAH 57.15
- C "Here is Lord Yahweh coming with power
his arm subduing all things to him
A the prize of his victory is with him" ISAIAH 40.10
- C "He reduces princes to nothing
B the rulers of the world to mere emptiness" ISAIAH 40.23
- C "I shall recount Yahweh's acts of faithful love, Yahweh's praises
in return for all that Yahweh has done for us
A for his great kindness to the House of Israel
B for all that he has done in his mercy
C for the abundance of his acts of faithful love" ISAIAH 63.7

[pause]

A With her one voice
C Mary spoke with the voices of many of God's people
who came before her
B And at the same time, she addressed all those to come after her
A She spoke of promises of mercy and salvation fulfilled
B and of promises yet to be fulfilled

BC "My soul glorifies the Lord
A and proclaims the greatness of the LORD
AC My spirit exults
B and rejoices in God my Savior"

Presentation time: 9 minutes

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