**Mary’s Song of Praise**

**Humility that leads us into His Presence**

Key Verse: Luke 1:46-48 “And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servants. From now on all generations will call me blessed.”

Merry Christmas! In today’s passage, there are two expecting mothers, Elizabeth and Mary. Both of them became pregnant in impossible situations. They met together with a fellowship of song and hymns. Let’s think about how they could experience God’s grace and who God is.

1. **The Lord visited Elizabeth**

The angel Gabriel brought amazing news to Mary that she would conceive the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The annunciation was the most important news in our human history. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords would come in the form of a human in this world to save his people from sin and death.

“I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled. ” Mary accepted God’s will by faith and was determined to fulfill God’s word to bear God’s Son through her. This acceptance and obedience was the greatest and courageous faith. However, Mary had to live in her current society as the pledged wife of Joseph. However, Joseph did not know what God’s will was and what her faith was. Anyways, Mary was not supposed to have a baby in their pledged period. If it had happened, she would have been considered as a dishonest woman. She would be stigmatized and stoned to death.

Mary needed help and encouragement. At that time, where was she heading to? Did she go to Joseph to discuss this matter?

**Look at verse 39. “At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea”** Mary went to Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel had cited Elizabeth’s pregnancy as a sign of Mary’s pregnancy.

Look at verse 40- 41. **“40 where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”** Mary entered Zechariah’s house and greeted with Elizabeth. The author, Luke, describes this situation in detail, and he emphasizes that Elisabeth did not hear the annunciation from Mary. When the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and came to know that Mary was pregnant and the baby would be the Messiah. At that time she exclaimed in a loud voice: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!

Here, “Blessed” is used as a superlative expression, which means that Mary is the most blessed among women because Mary would bear the most blessed child, the Son of God. When Mary visited her, any sign of actual pregnancy would not have shown at all. But Elizabeth believed and said it had happened. She was encouraging Mary, so Mary would not be shaken by the people’s criticism and helped Mary to stand firm carrying out God’s mission by being a mother of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 43. 43**But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**

Here, we learn about Elizabeth’s humility. Elizabeth called the baby My Lord. And she called Mary the Mother of my Lord. She admitted that she was so favored. Now Mary had just become an adult. My daughter Gail has been little girl to me. But she is now a college student. But I still view her as a little girl, like a big Sharon. To Elizabeth, Mary would be like a little girl and could treat her like such. She could also have boasted about her son.

Elizabeth might have said, “I have a baby too.” “My son also would be great in the sight of Lord. No one would be greater than my son … (Luke7:28).”

Instead, Elizabeth confessed, “But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Her humility did not come naturally or spontaneously. Elizabeth had to cope with her long term frustration sincerely and faithfully in the sight of God. Her spiritual struggle during her life time was heroic. Her humility was a fruit of the Holy Spirit while fighting back the childlessness blamelessly in the course of her life journey.

God allowed us to live in this problematic world. As we walk through life, trials also come up here and there. Throughout this journey of life, God may strengthen us to have the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Humility is one of our Lord Jesus Christ’s most outstanding characteristics among all others. Jesus Christ is holy God. But he humbled himself and came in this world as a baby. He lived as a servant in his earthly life and died as a sinner to save us from sin and death. Jesus valued the lives of others more than himself. Paul commands us in Philippians 2:3 **“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”** Surely with fallen mentality, it is impossible to value others above ourselves. Elizabeth had numerous reasons to value herself above Mary. But Elizabeth confessed Jesus My Lord, which means that Jesus is the sovereign. When we believe that Jesus is Sovereign, we are able to value others above ourselves because we are all under Jesus’ sovereignty and Jesus values them and bought them with his precious blood.

Mary needed encouragement, so she visited Elizabeth. In fact, this occasion could be viewed as the Lord visiting Elizabeth and her family to fulfill the word of God. Though the Lord was invisible in Mary’s womb and even his embryo was not completely developed, the Lord accomplished the word for St. John. “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his born” Not only St. John, but also Zechariah must have been inspired by the Lord’s visiting to his family.

1. **Mary’s Song**

As a response to Elizabeth’s blessing, Mary also burst out a song. Look at verse 46 and 47. **“ 46 And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior”** Here, Mary used “my soul” and “my spirit” instead of I. Mary wanted to praise God from her deepest heart. Mary glorified the Lord with all her soul and with all her heart. Here “Glorifies” is “Magnifies” in Latin. So, Mary’s song is called the Magnificat. In the Bible, the Greek word for “Magnifies” is used another place.

Philiphian 1: 20 states, “**20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”** St. Paul used the word in his confession when he was imprisoned in Rome in his old age. At that time, Paul was full of maturity. Paul wanted Christ to be always exalted in his body whether in life or death. In the same exact way, young Mary burned with the same desire for the Lord to be exalted. Young Mary and the old St. Paul were of the same heart and spirit to glorify the Lord in their body.

In our church, we have many young growing children and young disciples. I pray that they may grow to have the same desire as Mary to glorify the Lord in their lives.

Mary explained why she exalted the Lord in four parts. First, God has been mindful (v 48, 49), Second, God has scattered the proud (v. 51, 52) , Third, God has filled the hungry with good things (v 53), Fourth, God extends his mercy to his people Israel (v. 50, 54, 55).

**First, God has been mindful of Mary (v. 48, 49)**

Look at verse 48, 49. “**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.”**

Jesus is the one and only son of God. The Roman imperial palace was not at all worthy for his birth place. But God had chosen Mary as a mother of Jesus. As we learned last week’s passage, Mary was from Nazareth, the despised land with no education, no money and no decent family background.

But do not misunderstand that God chose Mary because she was a mere poor country girl from Nazareth. At that time, most of people lived in poor circumstances. Mary was just one of them.

Here, Mary describes herself as “the humble state of his servant (NIV)” and “the lowly state of His maidservant (KJV).” Living and recognizing that we live in a humble state are two different matters. The apparent quality of life would be the same. But the results would be tremendously different. As soon as we are aware of our humble state before God, then our attitude towards God would be changed and we will experience God’s mercy, God’s victory, and God’s salvation in our life.

Then, how could Mary recognize herself that she is in a humble state? Look at verse 47. **“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”** When we are pleased to do something, we will keep on doing it. Mary rejoiced in God. She wanted to stay with God. She loved what God loved. She did not delight in gratifying the desires of the flesh but rejoiced with truth. The more she stayed with God, the more she knew who God was. The more she knew who God was, the deeper she knew who she was.

Also, Mary defined herself as his servant twice in verse 38 and 48. The word “servant” implies passivity, lack of identity and subjectivity in human relationship. However in the relationship with God, the word “servant” implies commitment, trust, clear identity and subjectivity. Mary identified herself as the Lord’s servant and found the meaning of her life in God as His servant.

God was pleased and was also mindful of Mary. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully in her. Mary had a privilege to bear the baby Jesus. The everlasting father, the wonderful counselor, the prince of peace, Mighty God was growing in and came through Mary.

The first woman, Eve in the Garden of Eden, brought into this world sin and death. However, the ordinary girl Mary of Nazareth brought the Savior Jesus into this world. Because of Mary, the people of this world could find Jesus, the glory of God. And we are able to experience the salvation from our sin and death. How blessed Mary was! How great is our God! I praise our God our Lord who gave us Jesus through Mary and finally overturned the fall of man in the Garden of Eden!

If we humble ourselves and open our heart to accept Jesus just like Mary, Jesus will come into our heart. Jesus will be born in our heart and share the joy of righteousness and the blessing of being children of God. I pray that we may accept Jesus in our heart in this Christmas season and participate in the joy of salvation.

**Second, God has scattered the proud (v.51,52)**

Look at verse. **“51 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.”**  Here “inmost thoughts” means hidden, unrevealed, but also clear and systematic thoughts in our hearts. So, other people could not easily identify a man’s inmost thoughts. However, God knows our inmost thoughts from our hearts.

**Psalm 139 :1-2** **“1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”**

Here, being proud means that putting oneself above God in their heart. God judges those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. In fact, God is mindful to all of us. Surely, there is no partiality in God’s love as nobody can add or subtract his love. God himself prepares his endless love for all of us. The humble open wide their heart to God’s love, while the proud close theirs from God’s love. As humility leads us into God’s presence, pride scatters us from his presence. Because of their arrogance and self-righteousness, the proud may not admit their sin and reject the way of salvation God already prepared. Then how can we identify the pride in our deepest heart? There would be many but I had a few examples. If we are proud then,

1. We think we are humble
2. We may exalt and promote ourselves in time of success, while we may blame and degrade ourselves in time of failure.
3. We are not teachable.
4. We do not want to forgive others.

I was an ordinary country boy like Mary. My mother wanted me to go church since I was a little boy. In high school, I prayed to God, Lord I will stop going church but I will resume in college. I forgot the prayer. As a result, I failed the college entrance exam twice and got into a college that I did not want. I was exhausted and humiliated so I wanted to rest for one year in college because I received one year scholarship. God remembered my prayer. As soon as I arrived the college dorm, a bible teacher invited me to the bible study. One year later, I told my bible teacher, I would leave our church. But at that time, I started prayer. First day of my prayer it took 3 minutes. But it was so good. Second day, it took 5minutes. It felt so sweet. At that time, I did not know it was God’s presence. Anyways, I kept going to pray. One day, I repented my sin. At that time, the power of God fell upon me and I met with God just like Moses met with God in Mt. Sinai. I was so thankful that God was mindful of the humble state of me. From that moment, I accepted God’s sovereignty in my life and received his amazing grace as I grew as a bible teacher for campus student. But later proud has growing in my heart because of the special experience of prayer.

**Third, God has filled the hungry (v 53)**

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

One interesting thing is that Mary did not say that “He has filled the hungry with food.” Surely God would fill the hungry with food. Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish. Jesus fed 4000 people with seven loaves and two fish. But Jesus gave us something beyond food, the good things, for our eternal needs and the salvation. Jesus told those who were seeking only earthly food in John 6:35 “**I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”** Jesus came into this world to fill us with the good things, himself.

**Fourth, God is merciful (v. 50, 54, 55).**

**50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”**

Mary glorified God because God extends his mercy to those who fear him. God will be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever.

In this Christmas season, we are all in need of God’s extended mercy. Especially there are many sick coworkers among us. Becky Song underwent critical surgery and she is waiting for chemotherapy. Missionary David Lee has been hospitalized from Covid-19 contraction. Missionary Ruth Lim needs to restore her health. May God extend his mercy on us, so our precious coworkers may be fully recovered. May God extend his mercy on those who are unbelieving, so they may hear the good news of salvation especially in this challenging time.

In conclusion, humility is not easy thing to take. But it leads us into God’s presence. We pray that we may bear humility as a fruit of the Holy Spirit as we face many trials.

Let’s pray.