

The Magnificat

Մարիամի Երգը-Մեծացուցիչ

Luke 1:46-56

Music is a powerful instrument that stirs emotions, memories and thoughts. I can hear a simple melody from Gomidas which can transport me to memories of choir, musical nights at home, concerts in various cities...etc.

Mary's song of Praise (*The Magnificat* in Latin) is one of the most famous songs in Christianity. We Armenians have a great *sharagan Medzatsoustse* based on it.

Many great musicians such as Bach have *Magnificat* masterpieces.

I pray that this morning by examining the *Magnificat*, the song of the mother of Jesus, will bring a different kind of joy in your heart, mind and soul.

The Joy of Mary and Elizabeth

When the angel gave Mary the news that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit, she was surprised and afraid. The angel's first words of were:

"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28 ESV).

The word "greetings" in Greek is *Chairo*¹ which means **Rejoice, be glad.**

Of course, young Mary was terrified and confused. The angel comforted Mary the same way Zechariah, husband of Elizabeth and the father of John the Baptist, was comforted with the words **"Do not be afraid."**

God has His ways to surprise humanity.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were surprised by the news of the pregnancy, and now the same angel gives the Good News to Mary.

Mary visits Elizabeth. Both are pregnant in unusual circumstances.

"Mary's visit to Elizabeth is a wonderful human portrait of the older woman, pregnant at last after hope had gone, and the younger one, pregnant far sooner than she had expected."²

"And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit," (Luke 1:41 ESV)

-The remark about the Holy Spirit filling Elizabeth is crucial, for it indicates that **her remarks and emotions are directed by God.** This is not artificial joy.

Then Elizabeth said:

**“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to
me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the
baby in my womb leaped for joy.”** (Luke 1:42-44 ESV)

I love how the mother of John the Baptist calls Mary the mother of her LORD. How wonderful is when each person understands his or her place in God’s plan.

-Mary and Elizabeth shared a dream. It is an old dream of the people of Israel. **God made a covenant with Abraham** that He would bless all the nations of the earth.

These pregnancies are God’s plan in fulfilling that promise.

-John the “Baptist” will prepare the way for the coming of King Jesus, **the Messiah**, the One who will bring **salvation, hope, peace and joy.**

-Both Mary and Elizabeth knew Scriptures very well. They knew that they would live tough days under Herod the Great.

“They searched the scriptures, soaked themselves in the psalms and prophetic writings which spoke of mercy, hope, fulfillment, reversal, revolution, victory over evil, and of God coming to the rescue at last.”³

No wonder John the baby leaped for JOY... No wonder the room is full of JOY.

Mary sang a song of Joy (read the Luke 1:46-56)

“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.

⁵⁰ And his mercy (*hesed*) is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” (Luke 1:46-55 ESV)

Almost all the words are biblical quotations.

It looks like Mary had memorized them as a Jewish girl.

-Mary’s song **echoes the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2** and from book of Psalms. –

-Hannah also sang in joy celebrating the **birth of Samuel** and what God would do through her child.

When God appears to humanity, there will be joy, a joy that will revolutionize life.

- Samuel’s birth brought the nation of Israel to God.

- John’s birth brought repentance for the sins of Israel.

- Jesus’ birth is the climax; it brought the Good News of Salvation for humanity.

Let us examine Mary’s song

(1) Mary’s child is especially blessed, being at the center of God’s fresh activity;

(2) there is amazement in being any part of these astounding events; and

(3) joy and blessing come to those who believe that God does what he says.

-**It is a thanksgiving psalm**, the first part about Mary’s personal praise for her specific situation, while the rest of the hymn praises God’s activity in more general terms.⁴

1. Mary’s Heart is bursting with JOY

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, (Luke 1:46-47 ESV)

“I’m bursting with God-news; I’m dancing the song of my Savior God.”
(MSG)

“My soul rejoices in the Lord, I am extremely JOYFUL deep in my heart.”
(In my own words)

Have you ever felt that way in your life? When was the last time your heart burst with joy?

I don’t know much about Mary’s background, how she was raised, why God chose her. But I see a special relationship between God and herself.

When the angel appeared to Mary, he said:

“Greetings (Rejoice), O favored one, the Lord is with you!” (Luke 1:28 ESV);
“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” (Luke 1:30
ESV).

Found favor with God? Who am I to find favor with God?

There is a personal relationship between God and Mary. The essence of her joy comes when she exalts God.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

In exaltation she finds inner joy.

I believe our joy comes from this point.

Do I know God personally?

Do I worship and exalt Him?

Mary is human, and not a perfect one. She is like you and me. She was chosen to be the mother of Jesus. How wonderful and joyful it is to be an instrument of God.

It leads me to the next point.

2. Mary’s/our Responsibility

... for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. (Luke 1:48-50 ESV)

Once I heard a preacher said:

Two of the most amazing discoveries you will ever in life come when you realize:

a) God is working out His plan for this world, and

b) He has chosen a special part for you to play in accomplishing His plan.⁵

The God who sits in heaven has shown concern to his lowly servant. In the midst of all He does in creation, **Mary has been noticed.**

That is so beautiful; this is our God; this is the way God works.

She will testify to God’s care for her, just as he cares for others.

Mary, the humble servant of God, will be called blessed. She will be called blessed because of the birth of the Messiah through her. The focus is on Jesus and not on her...

“Mary will be honored “from now on” by all generations, not because she is special, but because she is the model and representative of what it is to experience God’s grace and mercy.”⁶

Yet, I want to stress here that **she accepted the responsibility to bear Jesus.**

-She was ready and willing to become the servant of God.

-She accepted the privilege from the Mighty One who would do great things in her life and through her life in the life of others.

The Mighty One will show mercy (*eleos*) (*hesed*) to those who fear Him, worship Him, honor Him...

What a responsibility to be an instrument of God in bringing all these blessings!

Last Sunday we spoke about the Parable of the Talents. To serve God is a golden opportunity. What a gift given to Mary, and she took this responsibility very seriously.

Let me also say that her life was not easy after all. **To be pregnant without marriage** was extremely shameful in those days.

She sees beyond her own struggle; **Mary sings for joy that a God so great not only notices a poor nobody like her but actually invites her to be a part of His plan to save the world.**

3. God is at Work

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. (Luke 1:51-53 ESV)

The hymn echoes language from the Old Testament as Mary rejoices in the saving action of God....

What was Jesus’ first sermon which was quoted from Isaiah?

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:18-19 ESV)

Jesus came to bring God’s Kingdom in this fallen world, the broken world where priorities are upside down. “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” We

recite these words almost every Sunday in Lord's Prayer. I pray that you mean it. By praying the Lord's Prayer, you are declaring that Christ brought the Kingdom of God here on earth, and we are part of that Kingdom. We have responsibilities towards this creation.

Conclusion:

- Do you see yourself any way bringing the joy of Christ in this world?
- Do you see yourself where you can bring the Good News to the poor and weak, to the humble and the oppressed, to the refugees and homeless, to wounded ones and the ones who are hurting?
- Do you see yourself poor, hungry to receive Jesus daily in your life?
- Do you have a *Magnificat* song, song of thanksgiving in your life?
 Why don't you read this poem again, and ask yourself where are you concerning in relationship with God?

1. *Chairo* is the same word used Matthew describing the wise men when they saw the star: When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy
2. N.T. Wright *Luke for Everyone*, P16
3. *ibid*, p15
4. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary Luke* p 66
5. T. Michael Crews. *Who is This Glad Girl and Why is She Singing?* 2006
6. Darrell L. Bock, *NIV Application Commentary Luke* P 67