

Mary's Song of Praise (The Magnificat)

a sermon preached on the

Feast of Mary

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at

St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

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Lection: Revelation 11:19 -12: 6,10; Luke 1: 41 - 55

To fully appreciate the wider picture of the Magnificat (Mary's Song of Praise) one has to go back to the scene setting of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, her cousin, who was also pregnant. Elizabeth would also give birth to a boy, to be named John, who would be the messenger, the forerunner, to Mary's child Jesus, the Messiah. Luke illustrates the mood of their meeting as, a joyous celebration of God's work and timing. In this celebration of Elizabeth and Mary, the word "blessed", which tells of God's giving, is heard three times.

The first blessing: "Blessed are you among women": celebrates what God has done in the choosing of Mary. In the second blessing "Blessed is the fruit of your womb", Elizabeth celebrates how the grace bestowed upon Mary will be a divine fruitfulness for all. The third blessing: "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her, will be accomplished" tells us of the free and total co-operation of Mary with God, and how great was the depth of her faith.

Mary was chosen by God to be the personal way of God's journey into our lives, to embrace us in healing and uplifting hands. St Francis of Assisi encouraged prayer to Mary because she was chosen to give birth to the Messiah and in so doing, the Son of God became our brother, our healer, our redeemer. Mary, in her free co-operation with God, is central to that story.

Elizabeth discerned the blessedness of that day when Mary came to visit her. Even the unborn child in her womb leapt for joy. This whole celebration prompted Mary to burst into song.

Mary and Elizabeth shared a dream that one day all that the prophets had said would come true. Like so many Jews of their time, Mary and Elizabeth studied the psalms and the scriptures which spoke of mercy, hope, fulfillment, revolution, and of God overcoming the evil of their world. Mary poured all of that into her song, like a rich, foaming drink that comes bubbling over the edge of the champagne bottle and spills out all over the place.

When Mary said "From now on all generations will call me blessed", she was not saying so out of pride. On the contrary. She was recognizing and accepting the gift God had given her. If Mary had denied her incredible position, she would have been throwing this blessing back at God.

Pride is refusing to accept God's gifts or taking credit for what God has done. Humility is accepting the gifts and using them to serve God.

Too many people deny, ignore, or play down, the gifts God has blessed them with. So let us take a leaf out of Mary's book by thanking and praising God for our God-given gifts, and use them to God's glory.

Amen.

References: S. O'Flynn
T. Wright

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