

MARY SANG
Sermon for the 2nd mid-week Advent Service, 2025
Luke 1:46-55

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Luke 1:46–55: **And Mary said,**
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 **and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,**
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 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.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.
Dear friends in Christ,

As we learn about Mary, we learn about Jesus. Mary has finished her conversation with the angel Gabriel; now she gets up and hurries to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who is six months pregnant with the infant John, known as the Baptist. Do babies in the womb respond to things outside the womb? Every mum can tell you they do!

So here comes Mary, bearing the Christ Child. He is not much more than a clump of cells, but He is a living human being. The words of the prophet Jeremiah apply here: “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you*” (Jer. 1:5). And again, “*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb*” (Ps 139:13). How mysterious are these things!

When Mary approached Elizabeth, she heard Mary’s greeting and “*the baby leaped in her womb*” (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth uttered an eloquent speech of praise to God, and calls Mary “*the mother of my Lord*” (Luke 1:43). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she perceives that the Son of God is living in her cousin’s womb.

Now it’s Mary’s turn to speak, so we focus on her sacred words, the Magnificat, sung by the church for two thousand years.

“**And Mary said**”—or maybe sang—“**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant... 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.”

People throughout history have appreciated comic reversals. For example, let's say we have a cartoon mouse that a cat is chasing. The cat is about to pounce. Just then, the mouse sees the mousetrap. He flips it up into the air, and the trap snaps shut on the cat's nose. The cheese falls out of the trap. The mouse grabs it and runs away laughing. The cats of this world love to torment the mice, don't they? It's so satisfying when the tables are turned, the cat gets his comeuppance, and the mouse gets away with it.

The Italian poet Dante, who lived in the 1200s, authored the epic poem *Divine Comedy*. And properly so. The world will end like this. Just when the powers of Satan are about to destroy the church, Christ comes down from heaven with His angels and throws the devil and his angels into the lake of fire forever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10).

First, Mary exclaims how happy she is: **“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”**

Why? Even though she's not a princess or the daughter of wealthy or famous parents, Mary recognises her humble status as a servant whom God has chosen to do something special for Him—**“For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant”** she says, and realises that she will go down in history: **“For behold, from now all generations will call me blessed.”**

Furthermore, she confesses that **“He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.”** Here we are getting to the heart of the matter: God is mighty and holy. Only someone holy has the right to judge; only someone mighty has the power to carry out judgment upon the wicked in the series of reversals that follow.

Yes, God is holy, and **“His mercy is for those who fear Him.”** That is, those who recognise that He is holy and they are not. For those who repent of their sins, for Christ's sake, He forgives them. He extends His love and blessing **“from generation to generation.”** So here is Mary, who, to her great surprise, *has been lifted up from her humble estate*. When Gabriel visited her with the news that she would be the mother of the Lord, didn't she say to the angel, *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38)? This is everywhere in Scripture. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you”* (1 Peter 5:6). And who exemplifies this more than Christ our Saviour, who *“emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, ...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:7-8). He did all this for you, to take your sins upon Himself and give you His holiness in exchange.

Now come these comic reversals I was telling you about. I'll give you four of them.

One: *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov. 16:18). Mary knew her Bible well. The Bible stories are full of examples. Take Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. She badgered her husband until he confiscated Naboth's vineyard. But when Jehu overthrew Ahab's son, he had Jezebel thrown out the window to the street, where dogs ate her body.

Two: Anyone who studied Shakespeare in school would perhaps be familiar with his work, *Concerning the Fates of Famous Men*. It contained story after story of ambitious men who were lifted up rapidly by the Wheel of Fortune in terms of wealth or fame, only to be tossed off by another turn of the wheel just when they were about to triumph.

Why? Consider this. Three: Scripture says of Satan that pride was found in his heart. He was one of the greatest angels. His name was Lucifer, *“bearer of light”* (Is. 14:12). But he thinks, “I'm as holy as the Son. Why shouldn't I be worshipped as well?” Satan was cast out of heaven, taking a third of the angels with him. These became the demons that Jesus so often cast out by His almighty power. As soon as Jesus was baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit, He was driven out into the wilderness, where He was tempted by Satan for forty days. Jesus defeated the devil by the Word of God. He did this for you, to take away your own sins of pride, lest you end up in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels.

The fourth comic reversal is this: In the Bible, there's the story of King Saul and young David. The people wanted a king, so they chose the biggest, tallest, strongest, best-looking man they could find: Saul. The trouble was, Saul was puffed up with pride. After a battle, God told them to kill the king and all the noblemen. But Saul disobeyed. He thought he could fudge a little on God's command. He spared the king, Agag.

Saul was rejected as king. The prophet Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint a new king. Like a beauty contest, Jesse displayed all his tall, strong boys—seven of them. None of them qualified. Confused, Samuel asked if there were any more sons. Yes, the youngest, David. "*Bring him in,*" said Samuel. God told Samuel, "*Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). So David, the humble shepherd boy, was made king, and he became the ancestor of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a king. It said so on the sign above His cross: "*The King of the Jews.*" And so He is. If you read Romans 9 and 10 carefully, you'll find that if you are a child of Abraham according to the flesh, it's nothing. A true Jew is one who, like Abraham, believes in God, the true God, the One who would send the Saviour. It is by *faith alone in Christ alone* that we receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Faith accepts the promises of God. Even faith itself is a gift of God, imparted in the water of Holy Baptism.

Mary went on to proclaim, "**He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.**"

In Mary's time, famine was always just around the corner. Drought, crop failure, and insects—people lived in constant fear of starvation. So it's not surprising to hear Mary describing God's justice in terms of food. And what a meal God sets before us in Holy Communion! Here we have the bread of heaven, the body of Christ, really and truly present to forgive sins.

Now Mary sings that God has come to help. "**He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His offspring forever.**"

The Lord has come to rescue Israel from her enemies. How has He done so? By sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for us. God has remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and you. Listen:

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).

"In My Father's house are many rooms... I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I shall give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

"Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

And finally this: "*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*" (Rev. 21:3-4).

The promised Seed that was coming into the world to defeat sin was now resting in the womb of Mary. Is it any wonder that this faithful daughter of God could not contain her joy! Whether her words were spoken or sung, it doesn't matter. Mary acknowledged that the Child in her womb is the divine presence through whom God's final mighty acts of salvation will be accomplished. We join with Mary in her rejoicing, because the Lord has entered this world to be our Saviour. Sing it with Mary! To God be all glory. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.