

He Has Done Great Things – Part 2

The Mercy of God - Luke 1:46-49

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Dec. 11th, 2022

Intro:

- This morning we are returning to our primary passage for our Christmas series where Mary is singing her song of praise because of what the Lord, the mighty and holy one, the one who saves, has done for her.
- God has also done great things for us through the word becoming fleshing, Jesus the Christ. When you enter this place and see these words, I hope you reflect upon what God has done for you. And in doing so, you praise Him. From this reflection comes anticipation and expectation of what He will do for you as He continues to show who He is to you throughout your lifetime and the eternity beyond.
- If you have your Bibles with you today, please turn to Luke, chapter one, and we will start with verse forty-six as we remember what we covered two weeks ago and then move into our text for this morning.

Luke 1:46-49 ESV

And Mary said, “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.”

- Our soul “magnifies the Lord” by the expansion of the fullness of God within us. Our knowledge and experience of Him grow, and because of that growth, we know Him more and praise Him greater as our spirit rejoices in His salvation in eternity and His salvation in our present reality.
- He indeed looks on us, to our humble state, on those who serve Him, and He honors those who honor Him. He blesses those who seek to bless Him. For indeed, He is mighty and has done great things, and holy is His name.
- Now then, Mary moves on to focus on the mercy and strength of God, seen in who He is and fulfilled in Christ.

Luke 1:50-51 ESV

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.

- This morning we are going to focus on two more attributes of God, and ponder, praise, and revere Him for His mercy and His strength. We are to revere God for His mercy and revere God for His strength.

Revere God for His mercy

- The word “revere” is not a word we commonly use, but I think most of us understand what it means. It is typically used as a descriptor of someone we hold in high esteem, someone we honor and look to and hold up in “reverence.” It could be someone like a “revered” coach—like Vince

Lombardi—or perhaps a grandparent, your “revered” grandmother or great-grandmother. We hold these people up to a special elevated place because of who they are and their impact on us.

- I am asking today that we would “revere” God, that we would hold Him in honor, as sacred and the one we look to and greatly esteem. In our recent American culture, there has been a pendulum shift from the past where God was seen as a “God who is wholly other,” far off and exceeding great, to bringing Him near as a “friend” or “companion” or like a “buddy.” I would like to shift this pendulum back toward the middle, where we grasp the nearness of God yet maintain a knowledge of the greatness of God and revere Him for who He is.
- Mary was doing just that. She could not get any closer to the God who was presently in her womb, and yet she praised and exulted God for His greatness to Her and to all generations. In this section, she focuses on His mercy and His strength.

Luke 1:50 ESV

And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.

- The mercy of God is not giving us what we deserve. And He extends mercy to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. Mary, I am sure, is calling to mind the Prophets from Old Testament Scripture like Nehemiah, who was grieving over the exiled people of Israel and the destroyed city of Jerusalem who prayed to God for mercy:

Neh 1:11 ESV

“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

- Mary also remembered the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, knowing that God was going to use the Babylonians to discipline His people.

Hab 3:2-19 ESV

O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

- Mary was bringing to mind God’s declaration about Himself when He met with Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai and said;

Ex 34:5-8 ESV

The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

- Those who fear the Lord, who revere Him and honor Him, will receive mercy from the God of mercy who is gracious, who is slow to anger, who is abounding in love and faithfulness, who keeps His love for thousands of generations.

- We are to revere Him for His mercy, which is given to us in Christ. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lam 3:22-23 ESV). Those who fear Him will receive mercy. This is a promise that God Himself makes to us. And His mercy is not just for those in the past or those in the present; it is for every generation forevermore. His mercy will never end, and it extends to all generations, to all those who are far off. Revere Him for His mercy and revere Him for His strength.

Revere God for His strength

Luke 1:51 ESV

He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

- The greater the strength, the greater the mercy. We are talking about a great God with great strength. His enemies are those who are proud, who think they are great or greater than Him. They are those who proudly resist and oppose Him, who think more highly than they ought to of themselves.
- The imagery that Mary is drawing upon again is seen in the Old Testament. This is what Moses said to God every time the Israelites moved from one place to another while they were in the wilderness.

Num 10:35-36 ESV

And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, “Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.” 36 And when it rested, he said, “Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.”

- The imagery here is that God would “arise,” and when He did so, His enemies would scatter. When they saw Him, they would turn and flee. The people of Israel did this with Goliath. When they saw how huge and strong and fierce he was, they scattered. And to this situation, David rightfully said, “who is this uncircumcised Philistine who has defied the armies of the living God?” (I Sam. 17:36) Who does this guy think he is? He is not greater than the God whom we serve. And David rebuked the army for fleeing from Goliath because they had forgotten the greatness and power of God.
- So the call was to “arise, O Lord,” and when the enemy sees You, they would scatter. Then when the people stopped, God would return to be with them and give them mercy because of His strength.
- The Psalms record this same language in many places, such as in Psalm 68:

Ps. 68:1-3 ESV

**God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!
2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!
3 But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!**

- This states the case as a promise, that God will arise and His enemies will be scattered. They will be like wax that is exposed to a flame; they will melt away. In contrast, those who—in humility and honor—fear the Lord and place their trust in Him, shall be glad, and have great joy.
- Now we are going to turn back to the prophet Habakkuk, who was anticipating what God was going to do, who asked God for mercy within His wrath. Habakkuk describes the strength and power and might of the Lord in dazzling and devastating detail. I want this description of God to be imprinted on your mind and expand your soul.

Hab 3:3-16 ESV

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.

5 Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. 6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? 9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. 11 The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. 12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.

13 You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. 14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

16 I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

- Does this not grip you? Does this not stop you in your tracks and take your breath away? This is the God of the Bible, who is full of mercy and abounding in love, and the God of unlimited strength and power. No man or nation will stand against Him.
- Habakkuk goes on to give this prayer, the one Heather mentioned last week in her message:

Hab 3:17-19 ESV

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

- God demonstrates His strength in power towards those who proudly resist and defy Him. God demonstrates His strength in mercy towards those who humbly receive Him. Mary said all these things recognizing that the one who was in her womb—this child called Jesus—was the mercy and strength of God.

Conclusion

- Jesus is the mercy and strength of God. In Him is life, through Him is salvation, by Him we receive mercy. God extends mercy to those who fear Him. God extends strength to those who oppose Him. We see the final revelation and culmination of this in the last book of the Bible—Revelation—where the salvation of God will be fully applied, and the fierceness of God will be fully felt. Without His mercy, no one will stand.
- So here is the application for us. Revere God. Praise Him. Serve Him. Worship Him. Know Him. Fear Him. Love Him. May He be magnified in you, and may your spirit rejoice in Him.
- For those of you who are proud in your heart and resist Him, humble yourself before the Lord, place your trust in Him, honor Him as the highest in your heart, and He will lift you up.

Ps 136:12 NIV

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever.

- Prayer people and pray