

Magnify the Lord

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Date: 21 December 2025

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 1 verses 46 through 55.

! 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. 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.

He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever. And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

[1 : 09] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? The Christmas story, the story of Jesus' incarnation, his miraculous conception in a virgin's womb, his birth in Bethlehem, the lowly social status of his earthly parents, the announcement of the angels to shepherds, the star in the sky that eventually led the wise men to him, the fact that the eternal Son of God, the one through whom all things exist and were created and for whom all things exist, spent his first night away from heaven in a manger as the infinite God became an infant child.

All of this is a reminder that God doesn't always work in the ways we would expect, nor through the people that we would expect him to work through.

The Bible reveals to us that God keeps his promises, but he fulfills them in ways that we wouldn't expect, and sometimes in ways that we don't desire.

Luke chapter 1, verses 26 through 38 records the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary. This was unexpected news given to an unexpected person, an unexpected person as well.

Luke 1, 26 through 33 says, In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

[2 : 49] And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

And of his kingdom there will be no end. A couple things are important for us to notice here. First, Mary was betrothed. She was engaged to a man named Joseph.

Jewish girls during this time often were betrothed at the age of 12 and married between the ages of 13 and 16. Mary lived in Nazareth, a small town that big city people despised.

She was a nobody from a no place. So imagine this teenage girl probably making plans for her wedding, dreaming and envisioning a future with Joseph as a carpenter's wife in Nazareth.

[4 : 04] And then suddenly an angel appears to you and says, You are favored by God. God is with you. Verse 29 says, Mary was greatly troubled at this saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Whatever Mary was doing that day, she wasn't expecting to meet an angel. Whatever future plans Mary may have had, they didn't involve her miraculously conceiving God's Son and raising him as his mother.

She didn't think when she would hear Isaiah 7, 14 read in the synagogue that, You know what? I think that virgin that Isaiah prophesies about, I think that's probably going to be me.

This news dramatically changed Mary's life. She was troubled by Gabriel's greeting. She didn't expect it. And she didn't understand how this impossible thing could happen. Luke 1, 34 through 38, as we continue on, Mary said to the angel, How will this be since I am a virgin? [5 : 19] And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son.

And this is the sixth month with her who is called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, You know, I'm really flattered that God would ask me to do this, but, you know, now is just not the best time for me.

I have a wedding to prepare for. What will people think about this? About me being pregnant before I'm married? Has God thought about that?

Has he thought about all the ways that this is going to inconvenience my life? Gabriel, tell God I need some time to pray about it. Okay, obviously she didn't say that.

What did she say? Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. Verse 39 says that Mary then made haste to see her relative Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist.

[6 : 36] Why did she make haste to go see her? Well, I'm sure she was excited for her. Maybe also she was seeking someone that she could talk to about all of this.

Someone who she could confide in. Gabriel would tell Joseph about the baby eventually. But at this point, Elizabeth was probably the one person that she could talk to who would believe her.

But truly, Mary went to Elizabeth because she was eager to see the sign that Gabriel told her about, which would confirm everything that he had said to her.

As soon as Mary entered the house of Elizabeth and greeted her, verse 41 says, And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she exclaimed with a loud cry, 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?

[7 : 37] For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

The first person in the Bible recorded as leaping for joy in the presence of Jesus is an unborn baby when Jesus was just in the embryonic stage.

If you're not pro-life, then here's one of many reasons to be. What happens next is Mary's eruption of worship as she pours out praise to God, her Savior.

She sings a song rich in theological truth as she magnifies the Lord who's done great things and will do exceedingly greater things through the microscopic embryo in her womb.

Mary was troubled when the angel appeared to her, but now she gushes with thanksgiving and gratitude and praise and worship for God's goodness and His faithfulness to keep His promises, and with joy that she was chosen to play a part in God's redemptive story.

[8 : 50] Mary didn't have all the answers. Mary didn't have all the answers. She couldn't see the future, but she knew one thing. God was her Savior. No matter how much her life was going to change, the unchanging reality that God was her Savior gave her reason to rejoice in seeing a song that magnified the Lord.

So the main idea for this morning's sermon is to magnify the Lord with your life. This should be true for all of us who've been saved by Him, that we magnify the Lord with our lives.

In moments when God surprises you with news that changes your life and alters your plans for the future, or when He asks you to do something that seems impossible, be like Mary.

Run to God, not away from Him. Magnify the Lord in the truths He's revealed to you about Himself instead of allowing doubts and fears or worries to cause you to minimize Him in your head, in your heart, and in your life.

And so I ask you, what do you do when the unexpected happens in your life? Do you meditate on the truth God's revealed about Himself in His Word and magnify Him, or do you minimize Him?

[10 : 13] People are expected to act joyfully this time of year, but you might be facing something unexpected right now that has diminished your joy.

Maybe it's an unexpected diagnosis. Maybe it's the first, or it's another Christmas spent without someone you love, which you didn't expect.

Maybe it's just that life in general, work, school, family, relationships, plans, bills, costs, or a number of things are filling you with feelings that are causing you to minimize the Lord and magnify your worries about today and about tomorrow.

Mary wasn't prepared for the news that she would conceive the Son of God and be His mother. She didn't expect it, but she submitted to God's will for her life.

And she trusted not in herself, but in God her Savior, whom her song magnifies. If you're a Christian, the worst thing that could ever happen to you will never happen to you.

[11 : 25] Like Mary, God has called you, He has saved you, and He has made you a part of His redemptive story. He has sent His Son that by faith in Him, He has adopted you as His son or His daughter.

He loves you. He keeps you. He will sustain you. Today in His Word, He will remind you of two reasons why you can and you should magnify Him in your life.

If you're not a Christian, the worst thing that will ever happen to anyone will happen to you. If you continue to reject God's gift of salvation, the consequences of that rejection is eternal.

Eternal, conscious torment in hell. The good news is that God has brought you here to hear the good news, to hear the gospel of what He's done, to save sinners, to show them His love, and sending His only Son, whom He gave, that by faith in Him we have eternal life.

In this passage, Mary magnifies the Lord in song, and throughout it, God reminds us of why we should magnify Him with our lives. It gives us two reasons, or we see two reasons in this passage.

[12 : 50] First, we should magnify the Lord in our lives because the Lord is mighty. He's mighty. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the Christmas song, Mary, Did You Know?

The lyrics ask a series of questions, contemplating what Mary knew, if anything, about the miraculous things that Jesus would eventually do. Mary, from this song, we understand, knew a lot of Old Testament Scriptures, and she trusted them.

Some liberal scholars question whether these words were truly spoken by Mary. They say Mary was too young, too uneducated, too simple-minded to compose such a carefully structured song with such great theological depth.

Mary grew up simply, but she was not a simpleton. What those liberal frauds forget or don't understand is that Mary would have regularly attended synagogue with her family.

She would have regularly heard God's Word, and she paid attention to it. She would have memorized the songs from Scripture that the Jewish people customarily sang on feast days.

[14 : 08] Gabriel said that God favored her, and certainly from Scripture, we see that God chose His favor to those who hear His Word, trust His Word, and obey His Word. Mary's mind was full of Scripture, and the sacred phraseology contained within God's Word.

Mary took Gabriel's message, the words of her relative Elizabeth, which confirmed them, and filtered them all through her knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures.

In those Scriptures, God repeatedly promised a Messiah, and repeatedly demonstrated His might, doing the impossible, including the miraculous births of Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Joseph, Samson, and Samuel.

Samuel's mother, Hannah, was married to Elkanah, who had another wife named Peninnah.

Peninnah conceived children, and Hannah couldn't. The Bible says that Peninnah was harsh in her provocations of Hannah, which led to periods of time when Hannah just wept and cried and could not eat.

Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping in distress as she asked for a son, vowing that if God would give her a son, that she would give this son back to Him to serve Him.

[15 : 31] God answered that prayer, and He blessed Hannah with a son named Samuel. 1 Samuel 2 records Hannah's song of prayer, thanking God for answering her request.

Mary knew that song. Mary knew that story. She believed it. She believed it like other Old Testament passages that saturated her mind and her heart.

How do we know that she knew that song? Well, she begins her song here in Luke chapter 1, echoing Hannah's song in 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 1. That passage says, and Hannah prayed and said, my heart exalts in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord.

Now look at how Mary begins her song. Again, and Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. The Greek word translated as magnifies is megaluno and can also mean exalts.

In fact, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures in 1 Samuel chapter 2, that word is magnify. It's the same word that's used in magnify or exalt.

[16:40] This word carries the idea of enlarging, of extolling, of praising, of glorifying, of celebrating something. Now in the past, this is where I'd insert an illustration about how many times the Chiefs have won the Super Bowl and how many times we've got to celebrate that.

But the mighty have fallen. And nobody said amen. Thank you. Look, we know how to magnify things, don't we, as people?

We know how to make a big deal out of things. People are pretty good at magnifying themselves, especially on social media. Here Mary magnifies the Lord, the one who is truly worthy of praise. And now again, notice the location where her magnification of the Lord takes place. She says, my soul, my spirit. Both these words refer to the inner self.

The combination of these words communicate the thought that Mary's total self in her mind, in her heart, in her life, she wanted to magnify the Lord with praise.

[17:56] In doing that, she exemplified the kind of worship that God is worthy of and the kind of worship that God desires, the kind of worship that Jesus commanded.

John chapter 4 is one of my favorite passages in Scripture. And Jesus keeps a divine appointment with a woman who was not expecting him. She was a Samaritan.

She belonged to a group of people that the Jewish people despised. She was an outcast even in her own society because of her sins. She had been married and divorced five times and she was living with a man who wasn't her husband.

And Jesus unexpectedly, he speaks to her. And eventually, he reveals himself to her as the Messiah. John 4, 24, he says to her, verse 23, but the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming.

[19:02] He was called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all these things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. The woman then goes back to her town and she invites them to come with her to meet Jesus.

Her meeting with Jesus changed her life as Jesus progressively revealed his true identity to her. See, Jesus didn't change, but the truth of who Jesus is was enlarged.

It was magnified in the Samaritan woman's soul and spirit and she changed. God cannot be made any larger than he already is.

But when he reveals himself to us, he enlarges himself in our lives. Mary knew the scriptures. She trusted in them. She believed what they said about God.

But the enunciation of Gabriel and her visitation with Elizabeth caused her to think bigger thoughts, grander thoughts about God than she had before. The truth, the reality of God working in her life, making her a part of his redemptive story resulted in worship that magnified the Lord in her inner person, in her spirit, in her soul.

[20:22] I grew up in the church. The Lord saved me when I was eight. I read my Bible. I was raised by Christian parents.

I had knowledge of God. But when I started going to seminary and took Bible classes and theology classes and reading books by theologians with names that are hard to pronounce that I'd never heard before, commenting on biblical truths that I'd never really thought that deeply about before God became bigger in my mind, in my heart, and in my life.

The more I learned, the more I knew about God, the more I wanted to know him. But you don't have to go to seminary for that to happen. Hopefully it happens when you come here, when we gather as the church and we have Sunday school and all the other things that we do where we teach God's word.

Hopefully it happens in your own life, in just your own study time as you spend time with the Lord alone with his word and you pray. My prayer often for us on Sunday mornings in my office before I come up here to preach to you is God be big.

Be big in our minds. Be big in our hearts. And the more God is enlarged in our minds, the more he will be praised with our mouths. as we better come to understand who he is and who we are in comparison.

[21 : 55] And that's what Mary does in verses 48 through 49. 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.

As God was enlarged in Mary's inner self, as she reflected on the truth God revealed to his people about himself in the past and applied that truth to her life in the present, as God became bigger, Mary's estimation of herself became smaller.

Just as she had responded to Gabriel's message saying that she was the servant of the Lord, so here again she calls herself God's servant. In the Greek, that word appears as the feminine form of *doulos*, which means slave.

Mary is the first person in the New Testament to identify herself as the Lord's slave, a designation that becomes the norm later for followers of Jesus.

Mary understood that the Lord is Lord, that he is God, that he is holy. She expressed her amazement that God, who is so high and so holy, would choose someone so lowly as her.

[23 : 13] Mary knew she was a sinner who needed salvation. She was far removed from the elite of society. She was an ordinary young woman engaged to an ordinary man who lived in a place other Israelites scorned.

Remember when Nathan received the news that we think we found the Messiah and he's from Nazareth and what does he say? Oh yeah, Nazareth, good things come out of that place.

No, he says, could anything good come out of Nazareth? Even Jesus' own community took offense at his claims to be the Messiah.

Matthew 13, 54 through the beginning of verse 57 or 55. After Jesus reads and shows himself that he's the Messiah and they're saying, is not this the carpenter's son?

Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?

[24 : 13] And they took offense at him. Mary understood her humble estate and position to other people. But more importantly, she understood her position to God.

She knew she was a sinner. She knew she was in need of a Savior. She understood that she was unworthy of God's grace to save her and make her part of his redemptive story.

John MacArthur said, like all true worshipers, Mary had a lofty view of the Lord and a lowly view of herself. If she was the most exalted of women, she at the same time was the most humble of women.

It is such humility that God requires and blesses. Mary knew that the coming Messiah marked the apex of redemptive history.

She knew from Scripture that God in his might blesses and he exalts the humble while he also humbles those who exalt themselves. In verses 51 through 52, she says, he has shown strength with his arm.

[25 : 17] He has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. There's a lot of powerful men in the Bible who experienced God's humbling might.

Nebuchadnezzar was one such man. He ruled over a vast empire, the Babylonian Empire. And though he was warned in a dream interpreted by Daniel to repent of his sinful pride, Nebuchadnezzar could not control his ego.

Daniel 4, 29 through 32 says, at the end of 12 months, he was walking Nebuchadnezzar on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. And the king answered and said, is not this great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?

While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven. O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, the kingdom has departed from you and you shall be driven from among men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox and seven periods of time shall pass over you until you know that the most high rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

And that's what happened. Nebuchadnezzar basically lost his mind and acted like he was an ox out in the field eating grass like an animal. He was behaving like an animal.

[26 : 45] And isn't it interesting that the more people exalt themselves over God and reject God, the more they start acting like animals instead of people created in God's image?

After seven years, God was gracious to bring Nebuchadnezzar to his senses with the realization he expresses in verse 37. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven for all his works are right and his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

God chose his might to save sinners and he did it in the most humble of ways. Philippians 2, 5-11 says this, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Mary magnified the Lord in her life as she dwelt on his mightiness his mightiness to save and that should be the attitude of every believer's worship the reality that God saves us by himself for himself from himself and he's done it by sending his son Jesus heaven's warrior who though he was humble was mighty he was mighty to defeat the enemies we couldn't defeat to truly worship God you must truly know how helpless you were or are to save yourself and the more you magnify the Lord in your life the Lord will show you his might and also reveal to you just how merciful he is and so we come to the second magnification here the second reason for Mary's magnifying the Lord and for why we should magnify the Lord in our life is that the Lord is merciful verse 50 and then verses 53 through 55 and his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his grace as he spoke to the fathers to Abraham and to his offspring forever

[29 : 29] Mary's magnification of the Lord goes beyond herself to others and what God would do for them in his grace Mary talks here in the prophetic past tense she trusts that what God is doing now in sending the Messiah will not only bless her in the present but others in the future future generations and she speaks of this as if it's a done deal it's one of those already but not yet passages or truths in the Bible Mary again she knew scripture she trusted in God's promises and fulfillment of them for her in the present and those whom God would show mercy to in the future she knew Israel had been anticipating and awaiting the Messiah a helper ever since the fall in Genesis chapter 3 God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent and reverse the curse of sin and death she knew this saving seed would come from the line of Abraham and that he would be a blessing to all the nations she knew this sovereign seed would rule as king over Israel and fulfill

God's promise to establish David's throne forever she knew this righteous seed was God's son and that he was a savior Mary wasn't omniscient she didn't know all the details but she knew that for those who hungered and thirsted for God's righteousness they would be filled by this son in Matthew 5-6 Jesus said blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied Jesus fills the minds the hearts the souls the spirits of those who humbly recognize their greatest need to be saved from their sins in Matthew 9-10 through 11 we read and as Jesus reclined a table in the house before many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples and when the Pharisees saw this they said to his disciples why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners but when

Jesus heard it he said those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick go and learn what this means I desire mercy and not sacrifice for I came not to call the righteous but sinners and so here we see this in Jesus life repeatedly his invitation for sinners to come to him to come to him and to find the deepest desires of their hearts in him to receive his mercy and to bask in his glory and his grace in Matthew 11 28-30 here's one of those invitations come to me Jesus says all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light again Mary was an omniscient she wasn't

God she wasn't deified in any way she was a sinner who trusted that God is mighty and that God is merciful to save she knew the gospel she knew she'd been shown mercy by God who is mighty to save and the real question isn't what did Mary know but what do you know do you know Jesus is

God incarnate do you know that he is the promised one who came to die in your place for your sins for sinners like Mary like you like me do you know that you are a sinner in need of a savior do you know that Jesus is king king of kings and he's lord of lords do you know that you will face his wrath unless you repent of your sins and trust to him turning to him in faith if you do know all these things do you magnify him in your life do you meditate on his might and on his mercy and so how do we adjust our lives to what we've heard

I think it's this to meditate on the Lord's magnificence how do we do that how do we meditate on the Lord's magnificence well let me give you a few ways one read God's word read God's word and not only read it but believe what it says that's pretty important and then also do what it says read it believe it and do it Jesus is magnified in our lives when we share our testimonies also with others about his grace his might his mercy to save us and to sanctify us he is magnified in our lives when we express our gratitude for what he's done for us in worship when we gather together as a church in this place and we worship him we're magnifying him he's magnified in our lives when we humbly come before him with our prayers telling him what we need and trusting that he will provide what we really need Jesus is magnified in our lives when we love one another when we serve one another when we practice all the one another's that we read about in the

[35 : 09] Bible in the church Jesus is magnified when we obey his commands to go and to make disciples and then once those disciples are made to continue to disciple them teaching them encouraging them to follow the Lord as we do that for one another as he commanded us to do so when we do those things the Lord is magnified in our lives as we anticipate that magnificent day when he returns and he takes us to dwell with him forever in paradise until then we are his light brother sister in Christ you are the light of Christ in this dark world you are the light of Christ in your home you're the light of Christ in your neighborhood you're the light of Christ in your workplace young person you're the light of

Christ in your school on your team in whatever activity that you're a part of and so together let's agree that what we need to do more and more is to magnify his light in this world let God's word have the final word Psalm 34 1 through 3 again I think one of those verses that Mary was familiar with that the Holy Spirit used in motivating the song that she sang and wrote I will bless the Lord and may this be our song too I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth my soul makes its boast in the Lord let the humble hear and be glad oh magnify the Lord with me let us exalt his name together let's pray Lord we thank you for this time that you've blessed us with to gather in this place to do what you've created us to do which is to worship you and God we hope that you've been magnified in that worship today through the reading and proclamation of your word Lord that you have shown yourself enlarged yourself in our minds in our hearts and our spirits that we would see that Lord the best way to live is a way that live where you are number one where you're magnified in all that we do so God this time of year gives us plenty of opportunities to share the gospel with people to talk about the true meaning of Christmas and so Lord I pray that we would take advantage of every opportunity that Lord we would live the life that you've called us and enabled us to live that we would live differently that people would take notice and that they would know that the difference is you Lord thank you for the hope that you give us God no matter what we face no matter what unexpected things happen happens to us in our lives Lord we know that you are sovereign and that all things are under your control and you do not panic and you do not fear anything and you are not a God who ever worries so

Lord help us to be more like you and understanding more of who you are that you would be magnified in our lives God we pray for those this time of year they have heard an unexpected diagnosis they are going to celebrate Christmas without someone that they love either for the first time or another time Lord for those of us who there's different things that are weighing on our hearts and our minds I pray God that you would be near as you promised that you are to all of those who are hurting Lord that in the ways that you do that you would give peace in the ways that you do you would remind them of the love that you have for them and the hope that we have in you that will not disappoint on that magnificent day when you call us home until then Lord may we shine as lights in this world and be glorified and magnified in us we pray!