

A Practical Guide to Glorifying God, Part 2

Luke 1:46-49

Well, as we turn to God's word this morning, we want to enter into the study here of Luke chapter 1. You can turn there in your Bibles. So, starting in Luke 1:46, Mary's Song, here's what it says, "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 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. 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.'"

So, I want you to see this morning from this opening stanza of Mary's song, four practical ways you can glorify God. You glorify God when you draw attention to his divine sovereignty. Another way to say it, you glorify God when you help people understand God as God, to know God for who he really is. Mary recognized God for who he truly is. And she spoke of him as Lord and Savior, both. He's the sovereign Lord, and he's also the sovereign Savior. Verse 46, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." By glorifying God as Lord and Savior, Mary here recognizes God's rightful place as the absolute sovereign over herself and over all mankind as well. He is Lord, which is an explicit reference to his sovereignty. His Lordship is not just over the heavens and the earth in a general way, but his Lordship is over every individual soul in a particular way.

Every sinner stands in relation to God as Lord whether he acknowledges that now or not because one day every knee will bow, Amen? Not only that, but every sinner who comes to God now, every sinner who seeks him as Savior, that sinner must come to God as Savior on God's terms, not his. Those who wanted God, who want God's salvation, those who want him as Savior without acknowledging him as absolute sovereign Lord, well people like that don't want God at all, do they? That's the very heart of

unbelief to keep seeking all of God's good gifts, to enjoy all of God's good grace, but then to reject the God who gave it.

When you parcel God into parts and you accept only the friendlier attributes of God, you know what you do? You deny the whole of God. That violates what theologians call divine simplicity. That is to say, God is not made up of parts. You don't accept the parts of him you like and reject the rest. You either receive all of God for who he really is, or you receive none of him; that's the deal.

Listen, that's the nature of relationship. You don't want to marry a spouse who says, you know, I like this part of you, but let's leave the other part out of the covenant because I don't like that part. I just like your exterior, but everything on the inside of you, can't stand. So, if we can do that..." We don't accept that even on a human level. Why would we do that with God? God is both Lord and Savior. And, magnifying or glorifying God means you must proclaim both truths.

God is both Lord and Savior. To hold back on either one of those truths not only does it mean you fail to glorify God, but you distort the picture of God. You present a testimony about him that is patently false. If God is presented as Lord alone, apart from the mercy of his saving work, then he is going to be

perceived as nothing more than an angry judge, a wrathful deity who will recompense all sinners with unquenchable fire. And that picture is quickly distorted further, turning God into a terrifying monster.

God is certainly no monster, but he is the law-giver and the judge. He will recompense the wicked with wrath, eternal wrath, in a fiery hell. But That's not all he is. He's also a compassionate Savior who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The Gospel call goes out to all. On the other hand, if God is presented as Savior alone, apart from his sovereign Lordship, apart from his authority, without the demands of repentance, then he's perceived as nothing more than a benign grandfather, an impotent Santa Claus god, who beckons to rebellious, disobedient children. He's up there begging them, oh, won't you please come to me? If they feel like it, they'll accept him. If he sweetens the deal enough, they'll profess faith in Christ, but don't press too hard on the demands of the Gospel, the repentance part and the, leaving everything behind part, and the obedience part.

Listen, that is the god of so much bad evangelism, the bad kind, which elevates the sovereignty of the sinner, leaving the salvation up to the sinner's choice. The sinner remains firmly on

his own throne, never budging from his position, never unseated from his pride and rebellion. The God that's offered to him is, is one for his consideration, an option that may improve his life in some way and certainly give him fire insurance for the great bye-and-bye. That's not the God of the Bible. That's not the mighty Sovereign of Scripture of the one that Mary sings about. That kind of God doesn't deserve a song.

The rebellious sinner has to be cast from his self-assured position of authority. He must be confronted with his mortality, with his limitedness, with his creatureliness, his true lack of autonomy. And he has to be thrown down before the sovereign God of heaven and earth. He is to bow before the sovereign God in humility, in remorse for his sinful rebellion and in repentance for his sin. His commitment has to be to leave his old allegiances far behind, to forsake himself and his sin, to forsake the world and the flesh, and the devil and to follow God as Savior and Lord.

Mary knew God that way. This precious teenage virgin girl knew God that way. She rejoiced in him as both Lord and Savior. She glorified him for who he really is. Notice verse 48, "For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant." That word translated to servant, it's not the word servant, it's the word

*doulos*, slave. Mary acknowledges her position before the Lord as slave, and that makes God her Lord and Master. And she rejoiced in those truths. She didn't shy away from them. She didn't back off. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. I rejoice to be the slave of God. He's not just the, *the Lord* and the Savior; Mary says, He's my God, He's my Savior, he's my Lord.

Listen, when you're rightly related to God like Mary was, when you bow in humble submission before his Lordship, when you come to him as your Savior on his terms, not your own terms, then you rejoice along with Mary and every other believer because you have become the slave of the Lord. You've become his property and that is a favored position, indeed, because he takes very good care of his slaves. In fact, he elevates his slaves. Jesus said, "No longer do I call you merely slaves, but friends. Slaves don't know their master's business, but I've told you everything." What master treats his slaves like that? Ours does. Mary's does. You can join the rest of God's people proclaiming the truth about him, glorifying him, drawing attention to his divine sovereignty. He is both Lord and Savior. Tell them both things.

We already read it, but take another look at the first part there of verse 48. Mary gives the reason for her magnifying the

Lord, the reason for rejoicing in God her Savior. She says, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior for," here's the reason, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant." Mary recognizes the sovereign God as her personal Savior, because he's looked down in mercy on her humble estate. Now that term translated, humble estate, is used to refer to someone of low birth, someone who is base, ignoble, common.

Today's vernacular, we call a person, that person a nobody, they're a nothing. These are the little people, the people who are insignificant in the eyes of the world. No paparazzi following them. Implication is this is the person who, because of low social standing, it's someone who's weak, someone who's powerless, someone who's even poverty stricken. This is someone who has no power, no resources, no hope in themselves. This is a person who is forced to look outside of himself for help, even to look upward to God. Upward to God and God alone to find mercy because nobody else is going to help them.

You know to do that, to reach up to God for mercy, to abandon hope in self, to abandon hope in others and to reach up to him and him alone that requires a virtue that's in very short supply in our day, and it's the virtue of humility. There's nothing like the sovereignty of God to humble man. We have to

recognize where we truly stand before God. If we recognize that, if we recognize our utter destitution, if we recognize our sinfulness before God, how infinitely high and far away he is, it's going to create this virtue of humility in us, and it's going to cause us to look upward to him.

As Jesus said in the Beatitudes, Matthew 5, it's only those who consider themselves to be poor in spirit, and those who mourn over their condition. Those and only those who are poor in spirit, who mourn over their beggarly condition before God. Only the meek, who look beyond themselves and away from their fellow sinners to find help and hope in God and God alone. God loves to respond with favor to the humble who cry out to him for mercy, that glorifies him, it shows his strength. The arrogant, he holds at a great distance. He draws near to them, yeah, one time in the end for judgment. The humble, though, he draws near to, all the time, he regards them with tender mercy, with favor, with kindness, with compassion. As it says in 2 Corinthians 7:6, God is the one who comforts the downcast. Are you downcast this morning? Do you feel far? Do you feel like one of those little people and everything is rolling you over? Draw near to God because he'll draw near to you.



Mary glorified God by drawing attention to his tender mercy toward her, mainly because she is a believer. She's one of the humble penitents. She's a lowly nobody. But God was pleased to save her, to make her his slave, numbering her as one of his precious treasured possessions. Listen, you'll only, you will only recognize the tender mercy of God if you humble yourself before him. If you recognize your true condition. Quit lying to yourself, thinking you're better than you are, you're more advanced than you are, you're more gifted, more capable, whatever. Don't think of yourself that way.

Humble yourself before God. That's why Jesus, according to him, it's those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek. To them and to them alone is the kingdom of heaven. They and they alone shall be comforted. They and they alone will inherit the earth. The rich, the self-satisfied, the self-assured, those who are frivolous, partiers, chasing happiness, and pleasure, drinking in all this world can give them, the arrogant, the strong, you know what? They'll never call out to God. They're just religious on the outside, but they never recognize their true need. When you're humble before God, when you acknowledge your lowly condition, cry out for his great mercy, you glorify him for his tender mercy, and you rejoice in that.

Listen, the gulf between our sinfulness and God's holiness above, it ought to, it ought to humble us. It ought to humble us, and we ought to walk in meekness with other people, loving other people. We're not proud, we're not arrogant, we're not stuck-up, we don't think we're better. We obey Paul's exhortation and we obey it with joy when he says in Romans 12:16, "Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight." Why? Because Galatians 6:3, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." We're all like Mary, of humble estate whether we recognize it or not. But those who recognize it call out to God for mercy, and God visits them with tender mercy. And then when God visits them with tender mercy, they glorify God for that tender mercy. They rejoice in him and they point others to do the same.

So again, just practically, you glorify God when you draw attention to divine sovereignty, when you draw attention to tender mercy. Mary said, verse 48, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed." That word blessed, that is the same, it's a verb form of the word *makarios* and that's the same word that Elizabeth used back in verse 45, when she pronounced a blessing

up on Mary. Elizabeth said there, she said, “Blessed is she who believed.”

So Mary here seizes upon that concept, recognizing something new is taking place. She says, Mary says here, “From now on.” That’s a statement Luke uses over and over in his Gospel to show something different. It’s a dividing line. It’s a watershed event. After this, nothing is the same. Starting with Elizabeth, moving forward from her, every believer in all subsequent generations of God’s people, they would call Mary blessed. Why? Why would all generations following Elizabeth acknowledge God’s blessing on her? Because she believed. Believing faith is the mark of God’s people.

I realize those who, there are those who claim to honor Mary, but they do so because of silly superstitions about Mary. The Roman Catholics say Mary was sinless, when she herself was conceived that she was immaculately conceived. The Bible doesn’t teach that at all. In fact, this passage Mary acknowledges her sin and her need for a Savior. For she rejoices in God my Savior. Some others say Mary remained a perpetual virgin, that she didn’t have any more children, Jesus was an only child. Ridiculous. Flatly contradicted by Scripture. Matthew 12:46, Matthew 13:55, John 2:12, Acts 1:14, all of those texts clearly

state that Jesus had brothers; two of whom, James and Jude, wrote epistles bearing their names in the New Testament. He had brothers. She wasn't a perpetual virgin. She wasn't conceived sinless. God did mark her out for special blessing, unequaled, unparalleled. Unparalleled and never will happen again. She's the only one in the universe ever who had this blessing.

But She's not talking about that blessing. She's talking about faith. We follow her in faith. We don't honor Mary by making her superhuman, elevating her above Christ, making her a co-redemptorist, dispenser of grace, that is a bunch of superstitious nonsense. But we do honor Mary, as Elizabeth did by joining all the generations who call her blessed because we recognize she found favor with God on the basis of faith. All who put their faith in God will find favor with him just as Mary did, and that's why glorifying God draws attention to profound wisdom.

God has leveled the playing field so all can find access to him on the basis of faith. It's not by strength, it's not by wisdom, it's not by wealth or prestige, it's not by virtue of our birth or our nobility, it's only by faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. And, God has shown us that we're all equally lost, all of us infinitely far from him. We're all in the same

position before him, condemned in sin, hopelessly lost in and of ourselves. None of us can work hard enough, be smart enough, perform consistently enough. Why? We can't erase the stain of sin. We're equally dead before God. On our own we are completely dirty, totally defiled, utterly lost, but God has pointed everyone without exception to find salvation through faith.

Faith is the virtue, get this, faith is the virtue which finds no virtue in the self. That's why the Puritan pastor, William Gurnall, he liked to call faith a self-emptying grace because faith looks outside the self to find all and everything in God and in God alone.

How does that draw attention to God's wisdom? Why do we look at that and say God is a very, very wise God? As I said, gaining salvation by faith, not by works, not by privilege, not by wealth, not by power, not by wisdom, salvation by faith, it evens the playing field. All humanity is equidistant from God, that is to say, they're equal distance. Each of us is equally far from him, but because of God and his mercy, everyone is equally near. As they say, all ground is level at the cross, right? That's pretty wise plan of God to do that. Not only that, but faith confronts our fundamental problem. It confronts our fundamental problem. The most profound problem that we have, the

source of all our sin, the source of all our pride, the source of every lust, every angry thought, every bitterness, every complaint, the source of all of it is unbelief. Unbelief.

By drawing us back to himself through faith alone, God is here confronting our fundamental problem. He's exposing unbelief, our need to trust him to believe him, to take him at his word. Adam and Eve fell when they doubted God, when they distrusted him, when they turned away to follow their own will, when they believed Satan's lie over his truth, when they doubted his character, doubted his goodness. But God's people return by reversing that fundamental sin, by flipping that, by subverting that, believing God and turning away from the lie, turning away from Satan. The point of departure from God is the very point of return to God. It's by faith, by faith alone. So, when we declare that when we teach people about salvation by faith, you know what? We draw attention to the profound wisdom of God. Justification by faith. That glorifies God. It causes us to rejoice in him and to worship him for his great wisdom.

Mary here magnifies the Lord, she rejoices in God her Savior because he's condescended to look upon her humble condition, blessing her with the ability to believe, and that has become the channel through which all of his saving grace

flows to her life. In her words, "He who is mighty," or we could say it in a verb, verb form, the mighty one, the one who is mighty, the one who is strong, exercises strength, "He's done great things for me." Great is the word *mega*, *megas*, large, massive, monumental. Without question the salvation of God is the clearest demonstration of his mighty power.

Some point out, rightly, I might add, some point out Mary's talking about God's mighty power to do great things for her by causing the conception of Christ within her, and that is not wrong. That's true. In fact, when you look back to verses 31 to 33 in Gabriel's testimony to her about what would be done to her in her womb and what that would mean for the world and for Israel, no doubt in Mary's, no doubt that Mary's mind is reeling from that magnificent magnitude of grace from God. She's reflecting on and who am I, why am I chosen, why am I so favored to bear the child who's going to save me and my nation? But notice how she says verse 49, "The mighty one has done great things for me." For me, again, this is personal.

National will come later at the end of her song; there in verses 54 and 55, Mary gets national. She understands covenantal implications of all this. We're going to get to that. She's going to be giving birth to the Messiah, David's son, the

political ruler who's going to save the nation, who's going to bring about the fulfillment of every restoration promise of God. She gets that. Here in verse 49, though, it's personal. "The mighty one has done great things for me." She's rejoicing in the mighty grace of God that saved her from her sin.

And the greatest demonstration of God's power and grace is in the salvation of sinners. The greatest wonder in the world is how God solved the greatest dilemma in the world by justifying the ungodly. How can God, who is utterly holy, who is perfect in righteousness, who is fastidious in the execution of his justice, how can God, who must punish every single sin, whether a thought, word, deed, whether sins of omission or commission, not doing what he commanded or doing what he forbade, how can that God justify any of us? How can he receive any of us to himself and still maintain his perfect justice? That's the greatest dilemma in the entire world. Folks, the way God solved that dilemma is the greatest demonstration of his almighty power. It's the greatest demonstration of the profundity of his wisdom. It's the greatest demonstration of the depth of his tender mercy. God justifying the ungodly, that's the greatest demonstration of his divine sovereignty, to justify any of us sinners while maintaining the perfection of his holy name; that is the marvel of saving grace.



How did God satisfy the wrath that Mary's sins deserved? By pouring it out on the son who would be delivered from her womb. How did God forgive Mary's sin? By looking upon the perfect sacrifice of the son who would be delivered from her womb. How did God receive Mary to himself as a woman spotless and the perfect fulfillment of his righteous standard? Again, by accepting the perfections of his own beloved son, showing his approval by raising that son from the dead and, like Mary, all who believe in Christ will likewise be raised with Christ, forgiven, spotless, perfect, and complete. That's worth talking about, isn't it? Strike that. That's worth shouting about, isn't it? That's worth singing about, and that's what we remember as we come to the Lord's Table this morning. Are you grateful for divine sovereignty, for tender mercy, for God's profound wisdom, for his saving grace in your life? I trust you'll not only rejoice in those truths in your heart, but you're going to bring glory to God by fulfilling your purpose, to tell others about him as well. Bow with me in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you, again, for the clarity of Mary's thinking. We understand that the Holy Spirit inspired this and that you are the source of all of this, and we're so grateful that you looking, even through Mary, as much

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as we honor her, as much as we look up to her and appreciate the example of faith and steady believing, faithfulness, we look beyond her to you. We look beyond all faithful servants to you because you're the God who empowers all of it. We love you. We give you praise and honor, and we magnify your holy name because of all of these things we've talked about this morning. Amen.