

# MARY'S JOY

Luke 1:46-56

## GOD REDEEMS

If you look back in Luke 1, we first meet Mary from the town of Nazareth. She's a teenager, likely somewhere between 14 and 16. She's betrothed to a man named Joseph. Betrothal was more than engagement, but less than marriage. To break off a betrothal was considered divorce, but betrothal wasn't the same as marriage. It had all the commitment of marriage but couples didn't live or sleep together.

And Luke tells us that Mary was visited by the Angel Gabriel. He tells her that she's found favor with God and says...

### *Luke 1:31-33*

*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 to 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."*

So Gabriel tells her — you'll conceive in your womb and bear a son. You're going to name him Jesus and he will be God's Son. He will be the promised King from the line of David — the one everyone's been waiting for — and his kingdom will never end.

Imagine Mary taking all of this in. Lots of questions swirling around in her head. She's been thinking about the wedding day and her and Joseph's life together and now there's an angel standing before her — telling her that God has a different plan for her life.

So she asks a logical question... *"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

Mary knows how babies are made. She knows about the birds and the bees and so she says, Gabriel — you left out some important details. Please fill in the blanks.

### *Luke 1:35*

*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."*

Gabriel fills in the blanks — Joseph will not be the father of Jesus. God will be his Father. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and bring about his conception. He will be holy -- He will be God's Son.

This is what Christians refer to as the Incarnation — the eternally existing Son of God taking on flesh and becoming human. God the Son, doesn't lose his divine nature in the incarnation. Rather, he adds a human nature to his divine nature so that Jesus is the God-man, fully God and fully man.

Check out the sermon— "The Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary" from the We Believe Series. We discuss the Reality of the incarnation, the reason for the incarnation, and our response to the incarnation.

But for now, just think about Mary. One minute she's planning a wedding and her life with Joseph and the next minute an angel is telling her that all her plans are about to change. She's going to be pregnant out of wedlock with God's son.

What will Joseph think? — He'll likely think she's been unfaithful to him and look to divorce her. What will the towns people think? — They'll think she either cheated on Joseph or that they couldn't wait until marriage — but either way — in an honor and shame culture — she's done. Her reputation is over and her life is over.

**Luke 1:36-38**

***And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.***

All of this sounds unbelievable. So, before Gabriel leaves, he gives her something to bring confirmation. Her relative Elizabeth who is well past child-bearing age is already pregnant. In fact, she's in her 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. She had previously been barren — but now she's pregnant.

Gabriel gives her a way to confirm his message and at the same time — gives her someone who will instantly believe her. Now we know from Matthew's Gospel that an angel also goes to Joseph to prepare him so that he will believe her as well. But at this point, Mary doesn't know that Joseph will be prepared to receive her without questioning her integrity.

Mary doesn't know all the details that will unfold — but her response shows a faith and trust in the character of God. She knows God is good and he can be trusted. So — she makes the journey to Elizabeth's home. On that journey, she has time to process all that the angel told her. And sometime between the angels announcement and arriving at Elizabeth's, Mary goes from being without child to being pregnant with the Son of God. And then in verse 46, Mary's story bursts forth in song.

***46 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.***

God's plan intrude on her plans. Initially she's confused and wonders how all this is going to work. She doesn't have all the details. She doesn't get a detailed timeline and job description as the Mother of Jesus. What she gets from God — is God himself. He draws near to her. He sees her in her humble estate and lifts her up.

And from deep within her soul, her spirit rejoices. She feels the greatness and awesomeness of God and her soul can't contain it. All the processing and thinking in her soul finally bursts forth in a joyous song.

It's like a geyser slowly building pressure beneath the surface — until finally the water and the pressure have no where else to go and it erupts. From deep within her soul — she sees that God Redeems. He is a God of redemption. She says — I rejoice in God my savior. Redemption is the gracious initiative of God where he saves us from sin and all it's effects. Now at this point, Mary doesn't know the details of exactly how God will bring about his plan for redemption through Jesus. But here's what she knows.

His names is Jesus — which means Yahweh Saves...God Saves.

**Matthew 1:21**

***She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.***

And she knows that Jesus is the long-awaited promised King who will come and reign and his Kingdom will never end. And she knows that God is on the move. The last 400 years have been silence — without a word from God — without apparent movement from God in his plan of redemption.

But now God is moving and he is bringing about his plan of redemption. She doesn't have to know all the details. She knows she can trust in the character and nature of God to bring about his plan of redemption.

What before seemed impossible — the immaculate conception of a child — has been accomplished. What God promised — He has delivered on his commitment. And she has learned that God can be trusted to make good on his promise of redemption.

And here's what we need to notice about this stanza of Mary's song. At this point, she isn't speaking about redemption generally. She isn't talking about what God is going to do in the world at large. She has personalized the redemptive plan of God for herself. Notice — she says, God *my* Savior. That's critical.

Because that's when it becomes soul-stirring. That's when it produces joy. God isn't theoretically doing something out there — Mary recognizes that God is doing something for her. She says — God has seen me. He has done great things for me.

And when you personalize God's redemption and he goes from being a Savior to your Savior, something changes inside of you. You recognize that God has looked on your humble estate. He has seen your lowness. He has seen your sin. And instead of rejecting you. Instead of being indifferent towards you. Instead of leaving you to figure it out on your own...God has entered in. God has drawn near. God has done great things for you.

And when that penny drops, God becomes your savior and from deep within your soul, your spirit will rejoice. You will find an unending supply of Joy. Not superficial happiness based on circumstance — but soul stirring — never ending joy that is deeper than circumstance.

***Martin Luther wrote —***

***We must both read and meditate upon the nativity. If the meditation does not reach the heart, we shall sense no sweetness, nor shall we know what solace for humankind lies in this contemplation. The heart will not laugh or be merry. As spray does not touch the deep, so mere meditation will not quiet the heart. There is such richness and goodness in this nativity that if we should see and deeply understand, we should be dissolved in perpetual joy.***

Mary's Joy and our Joy is rooted in God who redeems.

But not only does God redeem...God reorders. Look at verse 50.

## **GOD REORDERS**

***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.***

In this next stanza, we see that God is a God who extends mercy to those who fear him. That phrase, "fearing God" comes up over and over in the Bible. If you've been with us for a while, you've heard us define this phrase over and over.

But if you're new or by way of reminder — To fear God means that God is your highest priority, your deepest love, and your foundational trust. Or another way to say it is that God has your highest attention, affection, and allegiance. For those who have put their faith in God, they receive God's mercy.

What is mercy?

Mercy is the forgiveness of God despite the fact that we don't deserve it. We are ill-deserving and undeserving of his grace and forgiveness, but instead of giving us what we deserve — justice and wrath — God gives us forgiveness and pardon, love and grace.

How does that relate to fearing God? It means you see yourself and that you see God clearly. When you see yourself clearly — when you give an honest assessment of who you are and your actions — you come to the conclusion that you deserve the justice and wrath of God. Wrath is not a divine hostility or rage. God’s wrath is his settled opposition to evil and sin.

Then you see God clearly. That not only is he right to be opposed to your sin and that you deserve punishment, but you see that God is a God who extends mercy to the contrite. That God extends forgiveness.

And so when you fear God — you beg for his mercy and forgiveness. You know you are ill-deserving and undeserving but regardless you still ask. And those who ask — receive. That’s when the reordering happens.

We should be sentenced to eternal death and separation from God — but instead, we are forgiven and adopted as sons and daughters of God. The humble are exalted and the hungry are filled. The proud are scattered and brought low. The mighty are brought down from their thrones and the rich are sent away empty.

The proud receives God’s judgment because it is the root of all sin. Not only are the proud just as guilty of sin as the rest of us. But the proud refuses to acknowledge the reality of their sin and it’s offense to God. The proud heart seeks to minimize sin and justify it. In fact, pride causes humanity to forget God altogether. It removes God from his place of sovereignty and honor and fills that vacancy with ourselves.

The organizing principle for the life of pride is my rules, my plans, my life, my way. And Mary’s song is filled with joy that God is a God of mercy who reorders the world so that it is right once again.

This song reminds me of what Jesus would later teach in the sermon on the Mount...

***Matthew 5:3–6***

***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.***

***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.***

***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.***

Ultimately those who recognize their spiritual poverty, will seek after God’s provision. Those who are hungry spiritually, will seek after God to fill them. Those who feel no need for him, but are proud of their own attainments and capabilities — they will ultimately be scattered.

And while this is true spiritually, it is also true physically as well. God doesn’t guarantee anyone’s material wealth in this life. Yet, everyone who fears the Lord will receive an inheritance as God’s son or daughter that makes Warren Buffets Billions seem like chump change.

In this stanza, Mary extends her personal vision of God’s work beyond herself to see how it impacts the whole world. God’s mercy to rightly reorder the world is not my accident, but through his initiating and intentional actions.

David Mathis at Desiring God writes,

***“Many of us today are prone, by nature and nurture, to see God’s mercy as peripheral or incidental to who he is. We suspect that perhaps he shows mercy by accident or weakness. But if we let the Scriptures have their say, we will see that when God shows his mercy, he does so with utter intentionality and strength, and we as his creatures get our deepest glimpse of who he is not just in his sovereignty but his goodness. Not simply in his greatness but his gentleness. Not only in his towering might but also in his surprising tenderness.”***

God extends mercy and right reorders the world intentionally through a reordering of his own design.

Think about it...the God who is high above all has become low. The God who is mighty becomes vulnerable. The God of infinite size becomes small enough to fit inside the womb of a teenage girl. The God of light enters into our darkness to initiate a revolution that reorders reality itself and extends mercy to those who fear him.

*Lydia Brownback writes,*

*Both Mary's song and her meeting with Elizabeth foreshadow the saving work of the child Mary carries, and the nature of the kingdom he brings. Here we find the presence of the Holy Spirit, the entrance of joy, and abundant mercy.*

Mary's song foreshadows the saving work of the child she carries. And his Kingdom is a kingdom of joy and mercy to all who receive him.

What's our takeaway here?

God's mercy is a reordering mercy. When we humble ourselves in faith, we are lifted up. When we entrust ourselves to him, we find every provision. God is God of reordering mercy and we are called to entrust ourselves to him in faith.

Mary's song clearly identifies two postures towards God.

One is a position of pride, self-reliance, and autonomy. The other is a posture of humility and hunger. The pride will not acknowledge their need for mercy. The humble realize that the mercy of God is all they have.

Which posture reflects your heart?

We can have Joy because God redeems, and reorders, and finally let's look at verse 54 to see that our joy is also rooted in the reality that God remembers.

## **GOD REMEMBERS**

*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."*

Mary's song comes to a conclusion and she gives her final reason for joy — God is a God who remembers his promises to his people. Mary knows her bible. She knows that God has made a promises to his people and she specifically mentions the promise given to Abraham.

Let's look at it together...

*Genesis 12:2-3*

*2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

God made this promise to an old man without children. Abraham and his wife Sarah were well past the point of having children. Abraham was 75 and Sarah was 65 years old when God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have descendants of greater number than the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea.

And, that through him and his offspring all the families of the earth would be blessed. Now of course, Abraham had no idea how this would all work out and how it would all happen. But in faith, Abraham believed God would make good on his promise. And it took another 25 years before Isaac — the son of promise was born.

And when that happened — it bolstered his faith that God would make good on the rest of his promises to him even if it didn't know how it would happen or even if it would happen in his lifetime. Where he couldn't fill in the details — he filled the blanks with faith.

And now Mary connects the promise that God made to Abraham to what is happening in her womb. The child she's carrying — Jesus — is the answer to the promise that God made 2000 years ago to Abraham.

In fact, Paul says in Galatians...

### ***Galatians 3:7-9***

***7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.***

Mary is starting to connect the dots that will be made abundantly clear in the rest of the New Testament. God is creating for himself a people — of Jews and Gentiles — based on faith in God. And in 2 Corinthians Paul says...

### ***2 Corinthians 1:19-20***

***For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.***

All the promises of God find their "yes" in Jesus. We can have confidence that God will make good on all of his promises. It may seem like a long time has passed. God's promise to Abraham was 2000 years in the making. To us that may seem slow. But God's timing is never off. He is working out his plan according to his strategy and on his timeline. God is all-powerful. Nothing gets in his way. Sometimes I make promises that I intend to keep — but situations and circumstances change and I'm powerless to do anything about it.

But — God is all-powerful. He makes promises and he has the power to keep them. And He is all-knowing. He is not blindsided or taken off guard. Nothing is coming down the tunnel of history that he's unaware of nor is there anything that is going to happen outside of his sovereign will and plan. He is all-good. He doesn't lie. He doesn't make promises he doesn't intend to keep. The Bible is full of promise after promise from our promise making and promise keeping God.

And in this song, the promise that's in the forefront is God's promise of mercy and redemption. God's promise of mercy and redemption is fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now think about that for a moment. God promise to redeem and extend mercy throughout human history has always been connected to the gift of his Son as the payment price for sin.

John Donne — the poet and preacher from the 1600's — said it this way...

***The whole life of Christ was a continual passion; others die martyrs, but Christ was born a martyr. He found a Golgotha (where he was crucified) even in Bethlehem, where he was born; for to his tenderness then the straws were almost as sharp as the thorns after, and the manger as uneasy at first as his cross at last. His birth and his death were but one continual act, and his Christmas-day and his Good Friday are but the evening and morning of one and the same day.***

God extends mercy in the gift of his Son. The Advent of Christ — the coming of Christ into this world is the bold statement of God that he has remembered and fulfilled his promise. For the believer, our joy is not arbitrary or superficial. Our joy is grounded in the reality that God remembers his promises to his people. That's why we remain steadfast in the midst of suffering. That's why we are confidence in the midst of uncertainty. That's why we are hopeful in the midst of despair.