

“Mary’s Song...and Ours”

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This time of year, I often think back to Mary’s response to the angel’s announcement ([Luke 1:38](#)). It was absolutely beautiful – yielding to the Lord’s purposes for her, trusting Him to carry them out, depending on Him at each step – it’s a beautiful response. Especially when you consider what the Lord’s purposes would demand of her – giving up any plans she had for herself, giving herself over to the shame and the derision she would face as an unwed mother in that culture. I don’t think we appreciate what this meant for her. And I’m not sure she really knew either – at least not fully at that point.

It doesn’t seem to be until when she pays Elizabeth a visit that it all begins to really come together. And this makes sense. It was only natural for her to want to seek the counsel of an older, trusted woman – especially one who was going through a similar experience (after all, there couldn’t have been but so many women around carrying miracle babies!). And after hearing Elizabeth’s words, it’s as though the significance of it all breaks over her, as though the angel’s message began to take shape.

And so she sings what could only be called a “glorious song.” It’s a song filled with joy, confidence, wonder, praise – worship – again coming though in the midst of difficult circumstances. And what we need to see is how this song in her circumstances points us to worship even in ours – such that as we take this to heart, we too can then sing such a song ourselves. Look with me at what we see here.

Mary sings of God’s character ([Luke 1:49-50](#)). Think of the wondrous things she is communicating here and how that lifts her up into song. She sings of a God who is “mighty” and who does “great things.” But Mary goes on to describe not only the power of God but His holiness as well ([Luke 1:49](#)). To speak of someone’s “name” was to speak of their person. That is to say, if God’s “name” is “holy,” then it means God is holy. He is separate from and exalted above all creation. He is radically different, completely “other.” His ways are not our ways. Which is so important when we consider the next thing she speaks of – not only God’s power and holiness but His mercy as well, His compassion and kindness extended to those in misery or affliction ([Luke 1:50](#)) – us.

We need to keep these three things balanced together – the power, the holiness, and the mercy. To speak only of God’s power is not enough. Hitler had power. Pol Pot had power. Stalin had power. To rejoice that there is an all-powerful Ruler will not give us any cause to rejoice unless we know something of His character. To speak only of God’s mercy is not enough. Ask any parent with a sick child powerless to help them. We need the power and the mercy wedded together. And that’s what we have here – a holy mercy exercised with the greatest of power ([READ Psalm 62:11-12](#)).

That’s what gave Mary a song in the midst of the difficulties she faced. She was moving into uncharted waters and what little she knew of those waters looked choppy. In the midst of that, in the throes of that, she needed to know

that while it seemed her whole world was completely changing there were some things that were not changing at all – God’s holy mercy exercised with the greatest of power. No matter how bewildering things appeared, she could have clarity there. And she did. It calmed her. It steeled her. It flamed within her. And that allowed her – no, even more – it impelled her to sing.

The same can be true for us. When we find ourselves facing uncharted and choppy waters the things that Mary sang of here, the things that grounded her can ground us as well. And even enable us to sing. Merry Christmas to us all.