

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, and has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1–2) Amen.

Songs of Salvation

1. A Song of Lowliness

Luke 1:46–55 (NKJV) — 46 And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

This is the Word of God.

We pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10). Amen.

In and through the Name of the Humbled Servant whom God has Exalted, which Name is above every name, dear fellow redeemed,

Who here enjoyed playing with a magnifying glass or looking through a microscope as a child? That word “magnify” is related to the Latin title for this Song of Mary – “the Magnificat.” This is because Mary begins her song of praise with: “My soul magnifies the Lord.” The Greek word here means “to enlarge.” Does God need to be enlarged? Isn’t He already as big as they come?

As we consider what really describes who the true God is, we find something that not all people can see. Yes, people know of an almighty and eternal being who created us and who judges us. Yet not all know of this God who puts down the mighty and exalts the lowly. This is something that can only be seen under a magnifying glass.

It is so small. What resides in the womb of Mary is no larger than an acorn. And yet it is so big. What dwells within is nothing other than what Paul calls “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). Who would believe such a wonder?

The angel Gabriel had to make clear to Mary that this is not beyond God’s power – “For with God nothing will be impossible” (1:36). In fact this is truly a revelation of the LORD’s strength. The strength and might of God is focused on working big things through small means. It makes small what was large and makes large what was small. It is only a song of lowliness that will truly magnify what great things God’s has done. These are what our songs this season and every

season should be all about. Mary doesn't say "my spirit has rejoiced in me." She says, "my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior." Notice all the references in our text to the superior strength of God. "He who is mighty..." "does great things..." "has shown strength..." "has scattered the proud..." "has put down the mighty..." "sent the rich away empty..."

These are the songs we sing. On Christmas Day we will sing "Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice with exultation springing." How aptly Martin Luther put it ... "Proclaim the wonders God hath done, How His right arm the vict'ry won; Right dearly it hath cost Him."

What we'll see in the next three weeks is that the songs that accompany the birth of our Savior are far from subjective. They proclaim the victory God has won. They magnify the work of God our Savior.

v.51 ... God has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Consider for example that sort of person we all know who thinks more highly of him or her self than he ought. You know the person. This is the person who is first to grab the mic at karaoke night. He is first to comment on a particular topic – politics, cars, doesn't matter. This guy knows it all, and talks about it all. And when he is finished with you he walks off thinking he really told you a thing or two. He is lost in his imagination.

Yes, you do know this person well. This person lives with you. Not in the pew or bed or workspace next to you. Take a look inside. My old Adam is exactly the person we have just described.

After all, what happens when we participate in a family gift exchange? When all is said and done don't we find ourselves comparing gifts. Rather than being thankful for what we've been given, we are often thinking about how much I spent on her and how little she spent on me. We want to be first. We are angry when we don't get the credit or the reward we think we deserve.

We so easily become magnified in our own imagination – scattered in thoughts that we are the ones deserving something from God. And when we become big in our thinking, God becomes small. By revealing the salvation that He has worked through Christ alone, the proud are scattered, we become low, and we sing of the greatness of God's salvation.

48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;

It is not all about Mary. She was a sinner just like you and me. The sending of God's Son was not for the sake of the righteous or the pious or the mighty. It was for the unclean, the corrupt, the weak.

49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. ... 51 He has shown strength with His arm;

By brining the mighty low, God is magnified. This is the only way the song of salvation can properly be sung. "My soul magnifies the LORD!" Notice how many of our hymns this Christmas season sing bring us low and exult the mighty deeds of God. It is through the

magnifying glass of God's Word that what is so small in the eyes of the world, is revealed as the Mightiest of all.

Literally: "He has done a mighty deed with His arm." The arm ... strength and muscle, that which wields the sword, lifts the weight, throws the knockout blow.

On Christmas day, we'll consider the words of Isaiah chapter 52: ***The Lord has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:10).*** Sounds like something mighty indeed! Yet Isaiah goes on in chapter 53 to ask ... ***Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?***

Why would he ask such a question? When the arm of the LORD flexes its strength, will not the whole world know it?

Isaiah goes on ... ***For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:1–3)***

We spoke of gift exchanges. Well this is something we could consider the greatest exchange. For this Child, born of a woman, born under the law, despised and rejected, this Man of sorrows is our King, our Savior, yes, this is Christ the LORD! He was participating in a gift exchange – an exchange with you. In exchange for the suffering, sorrow, and sin that you and I have gift wrapped, did He complain? This was the Son of God, one who truly didn't deserve to suffer. However as Peter writes,

...when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:23–24)

In exchange for our pride and selfishness, He gave us in return all His lowliness and selflessness. The One deserving of center stage, to be the center of every conversation, to be first among all, has become last. He withdrew out of the spotlight, He came down from heaven to be a servant of all, to be servant to you. This is what made His exchange surpass all others as the MIGHTIEST DEED ever done.

52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

We starve without Christ. For what we lack is not food or clothes or a comfortable living; what we lack is the righteousness of God. Therefore in Christ, the emptiness is filled. When all is lost ... when those things that consume us, the goals we set, the projects we complete, the troubles we face ... when all these earthly things that seem so big to us now are gone forever, this remains yours: the eternal love and righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord. As Jesus said in the

sermon on the Mount, ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)***

God has kept His word and will always keep His word. What was promised so long ago – to Abraham and his descendants, what came to Mary and dwelt in her, what comes to us as spiritual descendants of Abraham by faith, will never change. God's mercy toward those who believe will never change.

54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

We should think of ourselves as the riches beggars. In every way we deserve nothing. We are poor, empty, and hungry. At the same time we are the richest, the most full, and the eternally satisfied. So we sing of our Savior. We sing of the might of God that dwells within Mary's womb. We prepare for His arrival simply by getting out of the way. We magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God our Savior, now and forever, Amen.