

# A Saviour for the Lowly

Luke 1:46-56 (Read 1:26-56)

*Halifax: 30 December 2018*

## **Introduction**

Today, I thought it would be good to do a special message rather than continuing my sermon series.

- We have a lot of our regular people away because of the holidays, and besides that, at this time of year we have reason to consider the coming of Jesus Christ into this world.
- This is always a good thing to think about...

Though I must point out that in our zeal to regulate our worship by God's Word, we are not keen on following the church calendar.

- Our reasons are actually quite simple.
- If the LORD had deemed it to be necessary or important for us to commemorate His birth on a certain day each year,
  - He would have surely commanded His apostles to do so.
  - But it is a well-known fact of history that there was no such observance for at least the first three hundred years of church history.
    - Instead there was a focus on the weekly Lord's Day.
    - That goes all the way back to the day that Jesus went to His disciples in the upper room to lead them in praise that God had accepted His sacrifice and that He was risen with salvation for all.
  - Ever since that day, as we see in the New Testament, Christians have kept the Lord's Day as a weekly day of feasting and joy.
- One of the problems that has risen from the observance of Christmas and other man-appointed holy days is that we tend to give these days a bigger place in our lives than the weekly Lord's Day that He has given to us.
  - I have observed this time and again—that when man-appointed holy days become bigger, the Lord's Day becomes smaller.
  - It is our desire at Covenant Reformed to honour what God has given us rather than what man has given us.
    - Besides, the LORD had told us not to add or to take away from what He has appointed.
    - In the Old Testament, He appointed various annual holy days to be observed, but they were appointed by prophecy immediately after the event.
      - If He had wanted such days in the New Testament, He would have appointed them at (or at least near) the time of the event that was being commemorated.

However, even though this is so, there is some benefit in preaching about a subject that is on everyone's mind.

- The Christmas season has become so dominant in our society, even though there is little love for the Saviour himself, that we have time off work and school, and basically have a winter holiday for visiting family and friends.
  - And we also have a lot of traditions which are very pleasant like sending cards and exchanging gifts and gathering our families for a feast.
- And so today, I thought I would take a little time to preach about the coming of Christ and in particular about how He came for the lowly.

- I actually want to do this for two reasons—not only because His coming is on the minds of our whole society, (in a way), but also because we are, as of this afternoon, finishing the Old Testament in our sermon series in which I am preaching through all the books of the Bible.
- This being so, I want to highlight the fact that all of God’s promises through the Old Testament about Christ’s coming are to those who are lowly, a fact that is brought out clearly by Mary in what is called the song of Mary in Luke 1:46-56.
  - I don’t think she actually sang these words, but they are a poetic oracle that she spoke by the Holy Spirit—inspired words for us to take to heart.

For our scripture reading, I want to begin in Luke 1:26 where the conception of Christ in her womb is announced to her by the angel Gabriel.

- We will read then from Luke 1:26-56...
- This is the word of God. Be sure to give it the attention that it is due.

**Lu 1:26-56:** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name *was* Mary. <sup>28</sup> And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!” <sup>29</sup> But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. <sup>30</sup> Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. <sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” <sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” <sup>35</sup> And the angel answered and said to her, “*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. <sup>37</sup> For with God nothing will be impossible.” <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. <sup>39</sup> Now Mary arose in those days and went into the

hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup> and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” <sup>46</sup> And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. <sup>48</sup> For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy *is* His name. <sup>50</sup> And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones, and exalted *the* lowly. <sup>53</sup> He has filled *the* hungry with good things, and *the* rich He has sent away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of *His* mercy, <sup>55</sup> as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” <sup>56</sup> And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy word.

- Now again, I want to focus on Mary's song of praise—I will call it a song—in vv 46-56.

### **I. Mary models for us here the rejoicing we ought to have in God our Saviour.**

A. She begins in verse 46-47 by saying: “**My soul magnifies the Lord,** <sup>47</sup> **and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.**”

1. Notice her emphasis on her soul and spirit.

- The two are synonymous here...
  - Both words refer to the non-material part of us, though soul always refers to the non-material part of a person who also has a body.
  - As we are souls who have a body, it matters very much what we do with our bodies—for our bodies are part of what we are...
    - And it is ours to express our praise to God with our voices and with our service which is performed with our bodies.

2. But it is also very important for us to avoid falling into an empty externalism...

- To come before God, to read His word, to say our prayers, to sing praise to Him and even to swoon a bit without the engagement of our soul and spirit.
  - Our praise of God is to originate in our heart.
  - God sees our hearts and He is not at all impressed with those who worship Him outwardly but who do not regard Him in their soul and spirit.

3. Mary has been moved from within by God and by what He has done, and here praise comes forth as a true expression of her inner being.

- She is not putting on a show here—her soul and spirit are engaged.

B. And you see what her soul and spirit are doing—and what our soul and spirit ought to be doing...

1. She is magnifying the Lord.

- That means that she is declaring His glory and His greatness.
  - She is seeing how glorious He truly is.
- I spoke to you about that not long ago—that when we talk about magnifying or glorifying God,
  - It is not that we make Him greater than He is—we can't do that...
    - but rather that we peer into more of His greatness ourselves so that we see it in a fuller way than we ever have before...
    - And we direct others to look upon it—to see God as He is.
  - But it begins with us seeing more of His glory in our own souls...
    - There is a danger of getting busy with seeking to bring others to glorify Him while neglecting to behold His glory in our own soul.
    - That is what makes those in ministry lose heart and turn to idols or adultery—to everyone's dismay.
      - They have been talking about God's greatness, but they themselves have not been beholding more of His greatness.
      - I wonder if that is the case with any of you this morning?
        - Perhaps you speak to your children or your friends about what He has done without actually magnifying Him in your own soul.

2. Mary is also rejoicing in God her Saviour.
  - a. This is intriguing—*rejoicing in God her Saviour*.
    - How much did she understand at this point?
      - Did she actually understand that the child in her womb was Himself God her Saviour?
    - She had been told both that He was the Son of the Highest and the Son of God... both expressions had been used.
      - She had also been told that His name was *Jesus* because He Himself would save His people from their sins.
      - And she had been told that He was holy and would reign forever.
  - b. Whatever she understood at this juncture in God's revelation, she was full of joy that God was her Saviour.
    - She knew that she could not save herself, and she knew that God had sent His Son to save her.
      - She was very glad for this because truly believed this.
  - c. You must ask yourself this morning: Is your joy in Him as Saviour real?
    - Surely, the soul that understands that we are condemned apart from His salvation and have no way to save ourselves is full of joy...
      - I mean, if you were diagnosed with a terminal illness in the prime of life and a cure was found, you would be filled with joy...
        - How much more when you are sentenced to eternal condemnation and the LORD against whom you have sinned comes to save you from your sin and from its consequences!
      - If that is real to you, you will rejoice and give thanks.
        - If it is not real, then believe that it is true that you are condemned and believe the promise that all who look to Christ will be pardoned and redeemed, and then you will rejoice.

## II. Mary goes on to give two reasons why her soul magnifies the LORD and her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour.

- A. The first reason is because He has noticed and regarded *her*.
  - She declares this in verses 48-49: **“For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.**
  1. She is just a lowly maiden...
    - She is no princess, she is no great one in the world... she is just a young woman who is betrothed to a carpenter.
      - Why *should* the LORD take notice of her?
      - Yet, He has regarded her.
  2. And not only is she a lowly maiden within the human race, the human race itself is lowly.
    - Indeed, she is a creature among creatures who are all very much inferior to our Creator—she calls Him mighty here... we are lowly, He is mighty.
      - Why should He take notice of any of us, let alone a lowly maiden?

3. And besides that, she is part of our fallen, sinful human race.
    - Mary is a godly woman, but she is not, as some idolatrous persons claim, without sin.
    - We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God... only Jesus is different because though born of woman, He came from heaven and is the Son of God.
      - If not for Him, God has every reason to cast us into the outer darkness—away from the glory of His presence, for we have all rebelled against Him—
        - As Mary says, holy is His name!
        - He is of purer eyes than to behold evil—that is what makes it so amazing to her that He should regard her.
  4. Now I would ask you... do you magnify God and rejoice in Him not only as a great God, but also as the God who has regarded you in your lowly estate?
    - This is very simple, but if you are dry and empty of rejoicing in Him, it may well be that you have never really faced your lowly estate before Him.
      - You have not thought about the fact that you are not only a rather insignificant person in the world, but also a member of the human race which is itself very lowly even before we fell...
        - And far more lowly now that we have fallen.
    - For God to regard you... even in His mercy to bring you this day to hear the gospel... is a most marvellous thing...
      - He who is mighty and He who is holy has regarded you!
      - Until you become lowly, you will never see what a marvellous thing this is.
- B. The second reason that Mary magnifies the LORD and rejoices in God her Saviour is because He has shown mercy to *His people*.
- She speaks of this from verse 50 to verse 55.
1. Not only has He regarded her personally, but He has remembered His mercy to all His people.
    - a. In verse 50, she says: “**And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.**”
      - She thinks here of how He has been merciful to them over the years... from generation to generation.
      - What He is doing now—in sending the Saviour He promised—is just more of that same mercy—it is the fullness of it.
    - b. She recognises the sending of Jesus to save His people as a fulfillment of His promise to the fathers of her people.
      - In vv 54-55, she says: **He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.**
        - All of this is a culmination of what He had promised to His people through the ages.
      - Her pregnancy is not merely a barren woman having a child, but it is God providing the Saviour that He promised from the time of Adam and Eve, confirmed to all the fathers, especially Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then again to David and all the kings and the prophets.

2. Your joy should not only be for yourself, but for the whole church.
  - a. Where would you be if God had not been merciful to His church through the ages?
    - What if He had not marvellously kept the line of Seth through those dark days when the entire pre-flood world was in rebellion except for that one family line that culminated in Noah?
    - What if He had not called Abraham and preserved him and his seed through the ages when they kept drifting away and He kept sending prophets and famines and enemies to bring them repentance?
    - What if He had not sent them into exile to humble them, or if He had not brought them back to the land and prepared them to bring forth Christ to His temple?
  - b. But now this great thing... that a virgin has conceived the Son of Promise, is God's mercy to all those people and to all of the church that comes after.
    - Jesus came to fulfil the righteous requirement of God for all of us.
    - He went to the cross to atone for the sin of us all—His whole church.
    - He preserves us not only as individuals, but as a body in which we sharpen and bless each other, keep each other accountable, worship corporately, encourage one another in our walk, and so on.
      - How He has loved us and how we ought to love one another.
      - God has placed each one of us in the body just the way He wishes so that we can serve one another in effectual love.
  - c. Let your thanks be all the greater whenever you see His people—with the simple fact that they are His people who are marvellously saved.
    - Wherever you learn that there are believers, rejoice that there should such a people (saved by God) in the world at all.
    - There is no entitlement here—it is all mercy.
      - One of our weaknesses as a society is that everyone feels entitled, but we are entitled to nothing but condemnation before God.
      - To whatever extent we miss that, we fail to rejoice in Christ our Saviour.

### III. But who are these people that receive the blessing of Christ?

A. Let's look at how Mary describes them.

1. She calls them the lowly. That is her primary description of them.
  - a. We have seen already how she describes herself as lowly when she says that God has “regarded the lowly estate of His maidservant.”
    - She was lowly in comparison to the great people in the world...
      - lowly simply because all of us are mere creatures, weak and helpless to even exist, before our mighty creator...
      - and lowly because of defilement by sin which all humans except Christ are charged with.
  - b. But she describes everybody else that God saves as lowly and hungry.
    - At the end of verse 52 she says that He has **exalted the lowly** and in verse 53 that He has **filled the hungry with good things**.

2. And look, she makes a contrast between *the lowly* as those God saves and *the proud* whom He destroys.
  - a. She sets them in direct contrast with each other.
    - Verse 52 says: **He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.**
    - Verse 53: **He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.**
    - Hannah said similar things about God blessing the lowly, speaking as one who had to endure the gloating of her husband's other wife who had children when Hannah was barren.
  - b. Does this mean that God has a thing against people who have success in this world and likes to reverse our fortunes?
    - If that were so, it would be a problem because as soon as He reverses things, then the people He blessed are His enemies.
      - The contrast is something more than that—Abraham was a fairly rich man when the LORD called him—he had servants and all... and Job was the richest of all men and God delighted in him.
        - So what is Mary talking about here?
- Remember, this is prophecy, so these words carry divine authority.
  - If it is the lowly who are saved and the rich and proud who are not, it is imperative for us to find out what it is to be lowly.
  - So what does Mary mean by lowly?
3. The lowliness that Mary is talking about is the lowliness that we ought to have before God.
  - a. It is the lowliness that recognises that you would not even exist without Him.
    - It is the lowliness that recognises that you cannot take another breath without Him.
      - It is the lowliness that recognises that you cannot keep your soul alive without Him.
      - It is the lowliness that recognises that He is God and you are not, that He is self-existing and you are created.
    - And perhaps more than anything, the lowliness that recognises that you are a sinner, unfit to live before Him—fit only for condemnation.
      - He is a holy God and is full of a pure and holy love that He gave us at creation, but that we forsook.
        - And how so?
        - By declaring our independence from God—by separating ourselves from His guidance and authority and help.
        - “I will be better off to live my life as I please, to eat what I want to eat, to do what I want to do—without God telling me what to do.”
    - Now we are in a world of selfishness where we have to jockey for position instead of advancing and promoting each other...
      - Where we have to look out for ourselves because nobody else cares.

- Where we have to watch our property and watch our back and guard our reputation from those who would try to destroy it.
- b. The lowliness that Mary has in view is the lowliness that begins with the fear of God—the source all true wisdom.
- Fearing God versus pride is how she introduces the contrast in verse 50-51: **And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.**  
<sup>51</sup> **He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**
  - Fearing God means that you realise that blessing comes from Him alone.
    - You don't have it in yourself to keep your soul alive.
    - You don't have it in yourself to restore your life from sin and selfishness—and you are foolish to be content with where you are.
  - Those who fear God, you see, are those who look to God for salvation.
    - That is why they are lowly and poor and hungry.
    - It is not necessarily that they have less in this world... it is that they know that they need to be saved and that they can't save themselves.
      - They fear God because they know that He has the power to bless and to curse, and that He has good reason to curse.
      - You fear something that you know has power to easily destroy you and power to easily deliver you...
  - Those who fear God in the way that Mary is talking about are those who know that He is a God who promises salvation to those who turn to Him.
    - Psalm 130 says that there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, because you see, those who are in rebellion may have some terror of God—but they won't allow it to remain with them...
      - They cannot bear it.
      - Those who accept that He who has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell are those who know that there is forgiveness with Him.
      - They are the ones who look to Him to save them, and they are the ones that He saves—those who fear Him and hope in His mercy.
- B. We have seen Mary's truth that He has mercy on the lowly who fear Him all the way through the Bible as we have worked our way through the Old Testament.
1. In Genesis, it is shown from beginning to end that the lowly who wait for God's salvation are blessed—
    - We have Noah who believed God would send the flood and built the ark at His command...
    - then Abraham and his seed who looked to God to establish the city that they could not establish and trusted in the Son He promised who would come and save them and all nations.
    - and then Joseph on his deathbed at the end of the book declaring that God will surely visit his people and bring them out of bondage in Egypt to serve Him.

2. Exodus has Moses showing the people that salvation is of the LORD when He delivers them from that bondage. The proud and powerful Egyptians are cursed and the lowly dependant Israelites are blessed by God.
3. Leviticus shows that we cannot have God's favour without atonement for sin that He alone appoints and provides—through His provision, we can dwell with Him.
4. Numbers shows that our sin bars us from God's city, and that we are dependent on Him both to correct us and to deliver us.
5. Deuteronomy sets in contrast the way of grace and the way of cursing—that we might know that blessing comes from humbly seeking God and that pride brings destruction... again, it is the lowly receive mercy.
6. Joshua shows that by lowliness and faith, we overcome our enemies and inherit the earth—Jesus our Saviour giving us the land...
7. Judges shows us that doing what is right in our own eyes ruins us, but that returning to Christ our judge brings deliverance.
8. Ruth shows that going away from God to find blessing on our own brings destruction, but returning to Him with nothing brings tremendous blessing.
9. In Kings you have proud kings who act independently of God and bring great destruction to Israel versus kings who seek the LORD and obtain favour for the people... like Christ.
10. And in Chronicles, you have those who humbly seek the Lord's blessing at the temple that represents Christ and those who devise their own way and are destroyed.
11. In Ezra and Nehemiah, you have God restoring those who repent and seek Him, and giving them strength to rebuild His city.
12. In Esther, the lowly cast themselves on God to rescue the people of God when the proud attempt to destroy them and see that He has mercy on the lowly.
13. In Job, you see a man with incredible trust in God and lowliness before him being taught by God to be even more lowly—beautifully so—leaving it to God to do with him as He sees best.
14. In the Psalms, you have the great contrast between the righteous (Christ and all who are with Him) who fear God and are blessed and the unrighteous who reject Christ and are cursed... the contrast runs all the way through between the proud and humble.
15. In Proverbs you have the beginning of wisdom shown to be the fear of the LORD... realising that He is God and we are not.
16. In Ecclesiastes, the utter vanity of obtaining the whole world (which is but a vapour) and the blessing of fearing God and keeping His commandments are set in contrast.
17. In the Song of Solomon, we learn the sweetness of our relationship with Christ when we find our joy in being His bride.
18. In Isaiah we have the promise that though we are sinners, Christ will come as the promised Son to deliver us, to atone for our sins, to destroy our enemies, and to establish His kingdom before our holy God—all things that we cannot do.

19. In Jeremiah, we see that God will not hesitate to chasten us when we need it, but will also restore us and make a new covenant with us.
  20. In Ezekiel, we see the promise of a great baptism of Christ that will cleanse us so that we can live and dwell with God as a holy people... for the lowly.
  21. In Daniel, it is the little stone cut out without hands that becomes the great mountain that fills the earth—the kingdom comes quietly but powerfully.
  22. In the twelve Minor Prophets the theme again and again is salvation for the lowly who humble themselves and look to Christ.
    - He is the branch, the little stem of Jesse, that grows up out of the ruins of the fallen house of David and becomes the salvation of the nations.
    - And we have this salvation not by our own strength, but by humbling ourselves and looking to Him.
- C. Let us learn from Mary and the Scriptures that blessing does not come to the proud and self-sufficient who boast,
- but to the lowly who look to God in faith and give Him the glory for all.
    - **Luke 1:50-51: His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**
  - Christ comes to bless those who see that they cannot save themselves and who gladly embrace Him as their salvation.
    - When Christ was conceived, it was God remembering the promise He had made to Abraham and his seed forever.
    - Let us all come and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God and receive the Saviour He has given to us.
      - Dream not of saving yourself. Be lowly. Be hungry.
      - We have a Saviour who is the Son of God because no other Saviour will do.

**Conclusion:**

Can you say with Mary, **“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour?”**

- What a Saviour He is for all the lowly who fear God and hope in His mercy!