

**Luke 1: 46-49; "My Soul Magnifies the Lord", A Christmas Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 23rd, 2007,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When Mary says that "her soul magnifies the Lord" she is not meaning by this, that she could make God any greater than He was and is, by her words of praise. God is great and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145: 3) She is rather speaking about making God greater in her own soul's experience, in her own mind's eye, so that she might be able to begin to praise Him with all of her heart, in the way that He deserves. For after all, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?" "Who can declare all His praise?" (Psalm 105: 2) Here, Mary is expressing her greatest of joys to her cousin Elizabeth, and they have been written down for others like ourselves, who read these words and ponder them, to think of Him in this same way of greatness also. Our soul's magnification of God does not actually make the greatness of our God any greater as we think about what He is like or what He has done for us. But the magnification of God by our souls is the way and means of bringing pleasure to the heart of God and the greater reality of His blessings coming home to our heart. It will be the means of cultivating a life of praise and obedience to our great God and Savior. And it does require that we actually perceive what He has done for us in particular. Here in verses 46-49 Mary does tell us what the Lord had done for her. And there are 3 things that she says, which well apply to all believers who have come to understand the great things that God has done for them through the Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing that Mary extols is the fact that God had become her Savior. The 2nd thing that she mentions is God's regard for her lowly estate. The 3rd thing that she brings out is the great things that He had done for her. Let's consider these things that we too might magnify Him in our experience more.

1st- Mary's soul rejoices in God her Savior. (Verse 47)

She was rejoicing in the Word of God which had been delivered to her by the Angel Gabriel. You can find it if you will look back to verse 28 of this first chapter. He said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women." "But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was." Even though she was instructed by the angel to rejoice; nevertheless she could not, because she did not have enough knowledge of the meaning of what it was that the angel was referring to. He attempts to allay her fears. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." She had God's Word given to her, and yet she could not rejoice yet. This is how it often is with young Christians and some older

Christians also, who have a little of the Word of God and yet they do not have enough of it to be able to rejoice in what God has done for them, or what He will do for them. God has called them to an entirely new life; a life of bearing the life of the Lord Jesus in their soul, and yet they find that they cannot rejoice. They have been given the best of news, the most excellent of good tidings, and yet they are fearful and uncertain that they can really rejoice or really live the Christian life. They have been called of God, and as such they know, they have been told, that salvation is God sovereignly coming to their soul and showing them His favor. And yet they do not know all of what that will mean, what awaits them in the future; what others will think of them as they attempt to live this life of faith. Finding favor with God is one thing. But what that will mean for me personally is another. Many Christians are pleased to find favor with God, but they are not sure that they like the implications for their personal life, now that they are a Christian. They have received enough of God's Word to know that they are in God's favor, but what changes will that bring to me, they think? They need more knowledge, even as Mary needed more knowledge; and then they know also that they ought to rejoice in the knowledge that they have received.

But the Lord will not withhold the knowledge that Mary needs, for He will have Mary truly to rejoice in Him. She receives the knowledge from the angel. Verse 31 says, "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus." "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." "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." And Mary says to the angel what you would expect a person in her circumstances to say, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" She is not a married woman yet. How can she possibly fulfill the purpose of God for her? Here Mary finds out what the intention of God is, in relation to herself. She is going to conceive a Son, and He is going to be great. He is going to be the Son of God, and He is going to rule over Israel, and His kingdom is not going to have an end. Christ is going to be the great One, not her. His kingdom and rule are going to be very great and magnificent, in a spiritual sense, to all of eternity. The knowledge given to her is not only astoundingly great, but it seems impossible in its fulfillment in her life. "How can this be?" she answers, "since I do not know a man?"

Now this, I would say, is often the way that it is for young Christians and perhaps for a few not-so-young Christians as they think about themselves in relation to living the Christian life. God is the God, who in our salvation, gives us knowledge on what the Christian life is going to be. It is all about Christ being the great One, not us. It is all about Christ being formed in our life. It is

all about His kingdom's advance and our part in bringing glory to God in relation to Him. It is just like Mary; all of these things relate to us in a very personal way, just as they did with her. It seems utterly impossible that in our present circumstances that we can possibly fulfill the purpose of God for our lives. But God would have Mary, and He would have us to rejoice in Him as our Savior. The answer that the angel gave to Mary concerning her question, "How can this be?", is that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Verse 37 says, "For with God nothing will be impossible." It is this truth, O Christian, that God would have you receive this afternoon in relation to your being able to live the Christian life rejoicing in God your Savior. The salvation of God is not only receiving and rejoicing in the word that our sins are forgiven and we are now in favor with God. It is also receiving the word and rejoicing in the reality that Christ is going to be great in us and through us, changing us by the power of His Holy Spirit to be useful servants in His sight, fulfilling the purpose for which He called us into fellowship with Himself. Mary came to know salvation in both of these senses. Have you come to know it?

This by the way is what is meant in 1 Timothy 2: 15 when it says concerning the role of women after Eve had been deceived and had transgressed against God's commandment, and brought about the fall of her husband through her own sin, "Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." It is by continuing to live by faith, walking in the graces of love and self-control, pursuing after holiness, even if you do not understand how you can change and grow to fulfill the purpose of God, that will insure that by God's grace you will attain to that purpose. That is a full orbed salvation, one that does receive the word; of God's favor being shown, but also receives that wonderful word that we are going to be changed by God through the power of His Holy Spirit to fulfill the purpose for which He called us in serving Him and promoting His kingdom. Mary rejoiced in God her Savior. Does your soul do the same? Do you rejoice in God your Savior? You will if you have Christ in your heart.

Then 2ndly- Mary extols God; she magnifies Him that He had regarded her low estate.(Verse 48)

"For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." Truly, it is a marvelous thing that God did for Mary. She saw herself correctly. She was a girl living in poverty and obscurity. She was descended from King David, but that lineage had greatly declined in its honor and glory to the place where neither Mary nor Joseph was anyone special, or anyone to be recognized as significant in Israel or anywhere

else. Mary was truly in a lowly condition in terms of the recognition of men. But the wonder of it all, was that God regarded her even so. Is there any woman, now, in all the world, through all generations who is more recognized than Mary is; the lowly one who became the mother of our Lord? Is there any woman remembered like her, and considered blessed as her? What a great rise, what a great leap upward; what a privileged position to hold in all of human history. How many thousands of girls in Israel would have loved to have received the news that Mary received? The reaction of Elizabeth in verse 42 of Luke 1 is entirely appropriate. "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Truly Elizabeth saw it correctly! Elizabeth began the long train of accolades of blessing which would be given to Mary. Verse 45 says, "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." It was God's purpose to raise her up from her lowly estate. It was grace, it was all of grace that she should ascend to this high station of privilege in relation to God and His only-Begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I would have you to consider this afternoon, that it is no less a regard that God has for each one that He sovereignly chooses to save from their sins and bring into saving relationship with Himself. It is no less a regard than He had for blessed Mary. For each person that God saves and brings into the eternal kingdom of His Son, to inherit all those vast and eternal benefits, has been raised from their low estate. You see this mentioned in the Word of God in many places. Psalm 113 for instance. And it is a reason for each Christian to extol and praise and magnify God. "Praise, O servants of the Lord!" "Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore!" "From the rising of the sun to its going down the Lord's name is to be praised." "The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens." "Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens and in the earth?" "He raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap, that He may seat him with princes--with the princes of His people." "He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children." "Praise the Lord!" This, I say, is what takes place for every person who is saved and becomes a Christian. God raises them from their low estate which they are when they are in Adam, and when they are in sin. He raises them up from their death in sin to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places. And how blessed is the Christian who believes that there will be a fulfillment of the Lord's Word to them personally. Are you made joyful in the remembrance of this truth today? God has raised you up, and will keep raising you up to heaven, up to glory, and to

inherit indescribably great and beautiful and precious things forevermore! The work that He has begun in you He will perfect until the Day of Christ. Will not your soul magnify Him for this? And will you not labor more for Him in service to Him because of it? And when you labor will not His raising you from your low estate lead you to a humble assessment of yourself no matter what level God chooses to raise you to? Think of the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: 9 - "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." And his words in Ephesians 3: 7 and 8, "...I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power." "To me, who am less than the least of the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Now think of your own life dear Christian. What lost and lowly estate did God's grace find you in? What sins were you entrapped and enslaved to? What lowly position of self-righteous pride were you in; all the while thinking of yourself more highly than you ought, and yet Christ saved you and raised you up from all your self-sufficiency which would have utterly failed to bring you an inch closer to God? He saw that and still saved you. Stand amazed and astonished and magnify the name of God with me this afternoon!

And then 3rdly and finally- Mary magnified the Lord for the great things that He had done for her. (Verse 49)

"For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name." How precious this must have been to the ears of God to hear this. Does our God have ears? God is most certainly spirit. But He most certainly has ears which hear every word which proceeds from our mouth and every whisper of declaration in our hearts. Certainly you believe this, O Christian. The Lord's arm is not so shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not so deaf as that it cannot hear. The Lord has heard. Have you forgotten, O Christian, the power that once saved you from your sins is the same great power that is at work in you today, to teach you more about what it means to know Him? You say to me, "But I am such a failure in living the Christian life, of becoming a holy person even as He is holy!" "I am truly ashamed of myself for my lethargy and my laxity in pressing on to know the Lord and in dealing with the sins of my heart, my unloving, selfish, sensual, proud, and uncaring ways." My friend you must repent if you are tolerating any known sins in your heart or life. But will you not remember that God did these great things for Mary even though she was a sinner. You say, "But she was not a sinner like I am a sinner!" "She was a woman of faith." Yes, truly it is so. But will you not see that God can do great

things for you as well; things which will go exceeding abundantly past what you presently can ask or think? Psalm 66: 16 and following says, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." "I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." "But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer." "Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me!" Will you not bless the Lord who is holy, even if you are not as holy as you want to be yet? Magnify His holy name as Mary did. She said, "He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name." If he did this for Mary, will He not do it for you? I am sure that He will. And your soul will rejoice in God your Savior!