

## Advent 4 / December 19, 2021

### Luke 1:46

***“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”***

Mary is one of the most intriguing people in the bible. Several women received visits from heavenly beings and gave birth to special children in miraculous ways; Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth to name three. Mary had the singular experience of conceiving by the power of the Holy Spirit and giving birth to the eternal Son of God. Isaac, Samuel and John the baptizer prepared Israel for the Lord’s coming, but the child born of Mary would be the promised Saviour through whom God would crush the serpent’s head, take away the sin of the world and give forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. In this spirit Mary sang, *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”* The child to whom she would give birth, would be both her God and her Saviour!

Mary sang her song of praise to her relative Elizabeth, who was also pregnant in a remarkable way. Previously the angel Gabriel visited Mary with the most amazing news. He said she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Son of God. No one ever had, or would ever again have a child like the one she would bear. Gabriel said, *“He will be great and be called the Son of the Most-High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.”* She would call His name “Jesus.” He would save His people from their sins. He would be called “Immanuel.” He would be God with us in human form, sharing our humanity in every way, yet without sin.

Mary is memorable because of the child she bore, but she is also to be remembered for her faith. Moses didn’t want to go when God called him. Zechariah didn’t believe it when the angel told him Elizabeth would bear a son in her old age. Mary heard something far more incredible and she simply said, *“Behold, I am the Lord’s servant; let it be to me according to your word.”* We remember Mary for her Son our Saviour, but we also remember her faith in God her Saviour. We pray that like Mary, we too may take God’s words to heart, believe and rejoice in Jesus our Saviour.

Imagine Mary’s thoughts as she considered the angel’s words and how those words would affect her life. She was a virgin, but she was going to have a child by the power of God. She was engaged to Joseph. How would he react to her words? Would he believe such an amazing tale? Would anyone believe an angel had actually spoken to her? How would the people of her village respond? According to the Law, women who conceived out of wedlock were to be stoned to death. A great responsibility had been entrusted to her and a heavy burden had been laid upon her. There were many obstacles to her faith. There are many things that can make it hard for us to believe. Many hardships can come to us because we believe. Yet Mary sang, *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”* Pray God that we may have such faith in the face of the challenges and hardships of our lives.

No one can emulate Mary in her role as the mother of God’s Son, but we can follow her faith. She is the mother of our Lord, but just as importantly, she is a model of faith. God values no quality more highly in human beings than that we take His words to heart and believe Him. In the letter to the Hebrews faith is defined as *“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. The only sin that cannot be forgiven is unbelief. The author of Hebrews says, *“without faith it is impossible to please Him.”* Every sin will be forgiven those who believe in God’s Son born of Mary. He was born for our salvation. In Him we have peace with God in the forgiveness of our sins.

One of the important things God shows through Mary, is that people of faith live in the real world. We are not given a divine exemption from the stresses and strains of daily living. If anyone could rightly have worn a tee-shirt that read, “Super Mom,” it would have been Mary. But she wasn’t super mom. She was a human parent and like other parents, she probably had moments when she felt like an absolute failure as a mother. Like the time she lost her Son in Jerusalem. When Jesus was twelve years old, His parents accidentally left Him behind when they returned home after celebrating Passover. They searched three days before they found Him in the temple. During those three days how do you think she felt as a mother?

As Christians we are not given an exemption from making mistakes, forgetting or overlooking things. God doesn’t promise to supernaturally solve our problems and rescue us from the messes we make. Mary and Joseph searched frantically three days before they found Jesus. She had the same promises God gives to us. He would never leave or forsake her. He would work through her weaknesses to make His power perfect. He would forgive her sins. When her faith faltered, He would uphold her with His Holy Spirit. In all things, He would be her God and Saviour. He is our God and Saviour and for that reason we join Mary in praise and say, *“My soul magnifies*

*the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”* He is her Saviour and our Saviour.

Like everyone else, Mary had to deal with the spectre of death and the sharp pain it leaves in the heart. When Jesus was one month old, Mary and Joseph presented Him to the Lord in obedience to the Law. A man named Simeon approached, took the child from her arms, praised God and said, *“This child is destined to cause the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the hearts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* A sword would pierce her soul. The cross would overshadow their lives. Her son would fulfil the purpose for which she gave Him birth, by offering His life on the cross; shedding His blood for the forgiveness of her sins, our sins and sins of the whole world.

Grief is unique to each person, but two most painful losses are the deaths of a spouse and a child. When a spouse dies, we lose our deepest link with the past. The person with whom we shared our adult years, with whom we experienced the joys and sorrows of life is gone. Death means we must face the future alone. When a child dies, we lose the future. We hope our children will survive us and live long after we have gone the way of all flesh. The pain of outliving a child can be unbearable. Mary experienced both these griefs. She lost her husband and saw her Son die on the cross. She stood beneath the cross without family. Joseph was gone and now her Son was being taken from her. How could God allow such a thing to happen? What would become of her when He was gone? The same thoughts that would go through our minds in a similar situation, must have gone through her mind.

God remembered Mary in her moment of deepest pain. Jesus entrusted her into the care of His disciple John. He would care for her as his mother. Most importantly, God blessed her with salvation through His Son, whom He gave to be her Saviour and the Saviour of all who hold Him in their hearts through faith. God doesn't spare us the sorrows of life or the grief of death, no more than He spared Jesus from those pains. He doesn't spare us, but He doesn't leave us desolate either. He promises to meet our needs, so that we may abide in faith and with Mary say, *“I am the Lord's servant may it be to me as you have said.”*

The last time we see Mary is just before the day of Pentecost. She is gathered with the company of believers, praising God for her Saviour, celebrating His resurrection, magnifying God with her prayers. God bless us that with Mary we may have faith in our Saviour; abide in Him; and in all things have faith to say, *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”* In Jesus' Name. Amen