

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

⁴⁷ "My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁸ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost
thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers." (NIV84)

Theme: My Spirit Rejoices in God my Savior

1. He makes me jump for joy
2. He makes me break out in song

It probably doesn't surprise you to hear that I'm not that emotional of a guy. Outside of a few sports I don't get too excited about much. It's not very often that I get very angry, or sad, or happy, or whatever other emotions you want to bring up. I like to think that I'm a pretty even-keeled guy. Perhaps you are similar to me, or exactly the opposite. But no matter what your natural disposition is, as a Christian you can't help but react the message of a Savior born for you. You join Mary in marveling at all the great things the Lord has done. And you say along with her, "My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior." He makes me jump for joy and break out into song.

The words of our first lesson are perhaps the saddest of all of Scripture. We read in chapter five, **When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.** This means that they were created perfect and holy. They were without sin and blemish; they knew God's will. But that was all lost. Adam and Eve doubted God's love. They wanted to be like God. They wanted to make the rules. They didn't want to obey anyone. So they rebelled against God's will. And they ate the forbidden fruit. Sin entered the world. And ever since then everyone has been born a sinner. Two sinners—Adam and Eve, conceived and gave birth to a sinner—and on down the line. We see the effects of sin from the start. The first two children born into sin—Cain and Abel. One was killed. The other became a hardened murderer. **Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin.** Abel's replacement was Seth. About Seth we read, **When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.** A generation removed from creation and man is no longer has the image of God. Now born in the image of sinful man. In the Garden of Eden, right after the fall into sin God gave Adam and Eve a promise. One of their descendants would destroy the devil by crushing his head. Adam's descendants waited for thousands of years for this promise to come true. Then one day an angel appeared to a priest named Zechariah. The Savior's forerunner was coming. A few months later the angel Gabriel appeared to a young girl from Nazareth. She was going to have a baby boy. But this girl was a virgin. Her baby wouldn't have a biological earthly father. It would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. This baby then,

would be unlike all others—he would be true God and true man. This baby wasn't conceived by two sinful parents. He wasn't born into sin. He would be perfect and would do no wrong. This baby, of course, would be called Jesus, which means "The Lord saves." Which is exactly what that baby would do. As the angel Gabriel told Joseph, **he will save his people from their sins.**

Gabriel told Mary that her relative, Elizabeth was going to have a baby even in her old age. So she set out to the area around Jerusalem to visit her relative. Elizabeth was excited to see Mary. Not because she hadn't seen her relative in a while. But because she was the Mother of her Savior. **Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** Elizabeth understood that God had blessed her simply by allowing her to meet the mother of the promised Savior. She couldn't hold back her excitement. Luke tells us, **In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!** For all to hear she shouted a blessing upon Mary and her child. She couldn't help but loudly exclaim the greatest of Jesus.

Elizabeth couldn't have done this without the Holy Spirit. We don't know exactly how she found out that Mary was going to give birth to the Messiah. Perhaps Gabriel mentioned it to Zechariah. Maybe Mary herself told her. Whatever it was, if it wasn't for the work of the Holy Spirit, she never would have believed it. But she did. And her faith led her to loudly proclaim the blessings she gave.

The Holy Spirit also worked faith into the heart of Elizabeth's baby. When her baby—who we know as John the Baptist, heard the voice of Mary, he leaped for joy. He leaped for the same reason that led to his mothers' exclamation. Mary was carrying his Savior. Even in the womb he knew that he was sinful. Even in the womb he believed that the child in the womb of his mother's relative was his God and Savior! Faith worked by the Holy Spirit. Faith through the hearing of the Word.

It is the same faith that the Holy Spirit has worked in us. He has brought us to faith through the Word. He has welcomed us into his family through the waters of baptism. He strengthens that faith through his body and blood together with the bread and the wine. He leads us to believe that a virgin became pregnant. And that her son

was conceived by the Holy Spirit. That he is true God and true man at the same time. And this causes us to rejoice. It leads us to shout and jump for joy. Like Elizabeth we can't keep quiet. We want everyone to know about Christ and his work.

And like John the Baptist we can't sit still. Not that we literally jump for joy. But the joy of our hearts swells up from within us. We can't contain our excitement when we hear of Christ. When we are reminded who we are by nature. And that God still sent his Son for us. Our Spirit rejoices. Forgiveness has been sent down to earth.

After Elizabeth's comments Mary began thinking about everything that Gabriel and Elizabeth said about her and her son and she burst out in song. And we can't help but join her in singing praises to our God and Savior.

The song that Mary sung we know as the "Song of Mary." Or by its Latin name, the "Magnificat." We sung this song during our midweek advent services this year. And we will sing a version of it today. There are many great lines in this song of Mary. Perhaps the greatest is our theme for today. **My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.** Mary knew that she was a sinner. Her parents were sinners just like ours. They gave birth to a sinner. She needed a Savior. And so do we. And she knew who that Savior was. It was her own Son. That little baby inside of her was her Lord. This was early on in her pregnancy. She may have not even noticed she was pregnant. And yet the Holy Spirit led her to believe it to be true. God was growing inside of her. And he would grow up to pay for her sins—and the sins of the whole world. He isn't just her Savior. He is our Savior too. So like Mary we burst out into song.

B. Mary's Song is filled with lines about God saving those who can't save themselves. **He has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. He has helped his servant Israel. He has filled the hungry with good things. He has lifted up the humble.** Mary didn't come up with these thoughts all on her own. Her song is steeped with language from the whole Old Testament. She knew God's Word and she knew it well. She knew all of God's promises given in the past. And she understood that he was finally fulfilling them.

Above all, God lifts up the lowly. We are the lowly. We are spiritually lowly. And spiritually hungry. So God lifts us up. He gives us the food of his holy Word. Those who are humble from knowing that their sins condemn them, he lifts up. He saves those who admit that they can't save themselves.

But God doesn't just lift up the humble and lowly. He also casts down the wicked. The Song of Mary is filled with lines about this too. Again, based on the Old Testament. **He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has sent the rich away empty.** Throughout the Old Testament we see God dethroning evil and wicked kings. We see God leading his people to destroy leaders who mocked him and his kingdom.

All those men certainly were all proud in the inmost thoughts. So are those who think they can save themselves. They think they are pretty good people. They believe that they have kept God's laws. Or that when God looks at them, he would be impressed. They have done many great things on this earth. So they must contribute somehow in some way to their eternal life. So God tears them down. He knocks them off their pedestal. He shows them their folly. And when they repent and confess that they are spiritually dead, then he shows them their Savior.

And that causes our hearts to rejoice. He leads us to sing his praises! But perhaps you don't like to sing. At least, not in public anyway. Or maybe you don't mind singing, but your voice isn't that good. And you are a little embarrassed that others may hear you. So during the liturgy and hymns you barely move your lips. Or you sing so quietly that you can't even hear yourself.

Whether we are good singers or poor, loud or quite—it doesn't matter to our Lord. As long as we praise him with our Spirit. As long as our soul is the one who is doing the singing. When Mary sang this song it came from her heart. Her spirit—her soul rejoiced in her God and Savior. And so does ours. You may have the loudest and most beautiful voice in the world, but if you are merely paying lip-service to God, he is not pleased with you. On the other hand, we know and believe what Mary's Son has done for us. And that leads our souls to rejoice and songs of praise to come from our lips. And we aren't

embarrassed to sing about our Savior. We sing for all to hear of his saving work.

Whether you like to sing or not, I'm sure you have your favorite songs. And as a Christian, I'm sure you have your favorite hymns. They might be reformation hymns. Or ones from Easter. I'm personally fond of Lenten hymns. And everyone has their own favorite Christmas songs. And they have their own favorite Christmas hymns. There are a bunch of good ones that proclaim the work of the Savior. So this Christmas don't hesitate to sing God's praises. Don't stop yourself from jumping for joy, exclaiming the good news of salvation, and singing the message of a Savior born for you. Sing from your soul, for Christ has saved it from eternal death.

I'm not an emotional guy. I don't get too worked up about much of anything. And yet I heart rejoice and I sing for joy. "Joy to the World," "Silent Night," "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem," and my favorite Christmas hymn, "O Come all ye Faithful." Whatever your favorite hymn, sing it to your Lord from your spirit. For he was born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit so that he could be what we were not and take away what we could not have. This causes our soul to rejoice and sing. Amen.