

## **Bible Study** Mary and The Magnificat

*Read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. And discuss the study with others. Jesus says where two or more are gathered together in his name, he is there with them. Our next Bible Study at the church meets Wednesday, on January 8. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

Our study of women in the Advent story concludes, appropriately, with Mary of Nazareth and with her triumphant song of praise and prophecy, the Magnificat. Jesus' birth, the coming of the promised Messiah and salvation of the people Israel, was foretold by the prophets. Mary, an unlikely prophet ... after all, she was a teen-age peasant girl ... now foretells Jesus' ministry and salvation for all people. In this ten verse song, Mary reveals and magnifies the new promise God makes through the son she is about to bear. Mary reveals the Gospel, the "good news" of Jesus Christ.

Let the word of the week be "magnify." Read the entire ten verses (Luke 1:46-55) before you begin the study and let this week be an opportunity to think about how God's promise has been magnified in our lives -- and how we can magnify this promise in our own words and actions.

### **Monday** Luke 1:46-48a (NRSV)

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant."

*Mary not only uses her words and actions to shine a light on God's promise, but uses her whole being. She bears a child; she is present in his ministry; she is with him at his death. For Mary, "magnifying" is a spiritual act. She does the hard work, but it is her spirit that rejoices.*

*What does it mean to act spiritually?*

*What is added to words and mere behaviors when we act spiritually?*

*Can you think of a time when you praised or rejoiced or witnessed (or maybe all three) with your whole being?*

### **Tuesday** Luke 1:48b-49 (NRSV)

[Mary continues] "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

*Here, Mary puts herself into context. She has been told she will bear the promised Messiah. She could have been pretty full of herself ... or pretty beside herself. Rather, she says, "... holy is {His} name," and that it is God who has done the great things, not her. For herself, she only accepts that she will be called blessed ... and that seems to be enough of a prize and enough comfort for the journey.*

*When God has done something in your life, what do you give God and what do you accept for yourself? Maybe, think of an example and tease out God's doing and yours, using Mary as an example.*

### **Wednesday** Luke 1:50-53 (NRSV)

[Mary continues,] "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

*God's mercy is for all times. Jews of this time did not think much about the future. They knew what God had done in the past and had great hopes for what God might do for them in the present. Mary would have known about generations past; now she speaks to the future. This would have been surprising. She says Jesus, her son and Lord, will be Savior for all times and for all people.*

*How does Mary know the future?*

*Sometimes, like in Mary's case, magnifying God requires saying surprising things. When have you praised or rejoiced or witnessed God's promises in ways that surprised those to whom you spoke or acted?*

**Thursday** Luke 1:50-53 (NRSV)

[Mary continues,] "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

*In Mary's time, everyone knew of God's might and God's steadfastness in delivering blessing to the faithful and vengeance to the unfaithful. What they did not know was that God was ready to use a different kind of power, the power of salvation through the birth and death of one man. Mary announces this plan.*

*Why do you think God chose Mary, not only to bear his Son, but to announce his plans? (A bit later, but still before Jesus' birth, Zechariah further fleshes out the plan in Luke 1:67-79)*

*Have you been called on to announce a plan, particularly one that would cause changes? Maybe at work or in your family?*

*Why do you think you were chosen, particularly if you were not the logical choice, as with Mary?*

**Friday** Luke 1:50-53 (NRSV)

[Mary continues,] "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

*Mary announces that God's priorities were going to be changing. It would be the lowly who would be raised and the poor who would be enriched, maybe not materially, but certainly spiritually. Jesus would show how it is done and would leave instructions and a team to get things underway. God's game plan has not changed since that announcement ... at least as far as we know.*

*Did God's priorities change with the coming of Jesus? (This question might go well beyond this study, but might be the most important question around the birth, life, and death of Jesus.)*

*How is God's plan doing? Do you see evidence that the powerful have been brought down and the lowly lifted and the hungry filled and the rich sent away? (If not, remember there is no end to God's mercy through Jesus Christ.)*

**Saturday** Luke 1:54-55 (NRSV)

[Mary concludes,] "He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise

he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

*God keeps God's promises. By reminding her people that God kept a very big promise to Abraham, Mary was assuring them that God would keep God's new promise of salvation through Jesus, the Christ, for all time.*

*How do you know that God will fulfill God's promise to you? To all people?*

*Who has assured you? What did they say or do that assured you?*

***God, thank you for your promise, for Jesus who delivers it, and for Mary's assurance that it is for all times and for all people. Amen***

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