Luke 1:46-49

Sermon: **Deliverer** 2022

written by: Danijel Dragaš



INTRODUCTION

1 Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back to Bible Perspective. Let's take a brief moment to remember what we talked about in the previous sermon before we continue studying the text.

1.1 In the previous sermon, we talked about Mary's visit to Elizabeth.

We talked about how Mary went to Elizabeth, and how Elizabeth, after hearing Mary's greeting, recognized that the child Mary was carrying was connected to God's promises.

1.2 Then we talked about the meaning of the word "blessing".

We saw that, in the Bible, blessing does not simply mean material prosperity, good health, peace, or a comfortable life. God certainly gives us many good things in this life, but there is something much greater toward which he is leading us. And that is the ultimate blessing of life in His kingdom.

1.3 We also talked about what it means to believe God. It is not the same thing to believe that God exists and to believe God. If we truly believe God, then we will believe His promises, we will listen to Him, and that will bring our lives into alignment with what He tells us through the Scriptures. In other words, it will change us from the inside out.

1.4 Okay.

Now I'm going to read the passage from the Bible. We're currently in the (Luke 1:46-55)

And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; for behold, from this time on all generation will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and Holy is His name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich emptyhanded. He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance od His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever."

1.5 This is, essentially, Mary's hymn of praise that we find here.

It is closely connected with what I have been talking about in the previous sermons: Mary knows the Scriptures and God's promises very well.

1.6 The best evidence of that is the hymn of praise she has shared with us here.

THE DELIVERER

2 First, let's talk a little about (Luke 1:46)

And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord."

2.1 Last time, we touched on the question of what Mary actually means when she says, "My soul exalts the Lord."

I believe Mary's statement does not come merely from an emotional reaction in the moment. Mary understands what God is telling her and what is happening in her life. She understands why this is happening and how all of it is connected to what God has promised for centuries. That is why she can see the greatness of God's work, his goodness, and his faithfulness. And that is why her soul exalts the Lord.

2.2 Now let's look at how that understanding is reflected in her words.

(Luke 1:47) says:

"And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

Last time, we did not talk about the word "Savior." In Greek, the word is *sōtēr*, which means "savior," "deliverer," or "one who saves."

2.3 When Mary speaks here about God as her "Savior," I believe she is primarily speaking about God, Yahweh. She recognizes God as the one who "delivers" his people and who is now acting again to fulfill his promises.

2.4 That is why, in this sermon, I decided to use the synonym "Deliverer" instead of Savior." And why?

Because as Christians, when we hear the word "Savior," we very often immediately think of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and thereby saved us from our sins. And that, of course, is true.

2.5 But precisely because Christian teaching and tradition have shaped our understanding of that word for centuries, I would rather use the word "Deliverer" here, because I believe it will help us better understand what Mary has in mind.

2.6 Mary, I believe, sees something that is connected with the entire history of her people. She knows that Yahweh is the Deliverer of Israel, but now she understands something even more important: God is going to accomplish his deliverance through the child she is carrying.

When she thinks about this child, I believe she sees before her the long-promised king, the one who will come from God, sit on David's throne, and deliver his people from their oppressors.

2.7 Why does Mary understand the Deliverer in this way?

Well, let me give you just a few examples, although there are many more.

In the Book of Exodus, in chapter 6, God presents himself to the Israelites as their Deliverer. He tells them that he will deliver them from the burdens imposed on them by the Egyptians and free them from slavery. Israel, therefore, knew from its own experience that Yahweh is the God who delivers his people.



But throughout their history, this idea of deliverance was not connected only with God as the one who delivers. Many times, God raised up people through whom He delivered Israel.

In the Book of Judges, we read how Yahweh raised up judges who delivered the people from the hands of their enemies. When Israel cried out to God, God would raise up a deliverer for them. That happened with Othniel and then with the other judges.

Later, we see the same pattern during the time of the kings. Again, God gave Israel deliverers and used them to free his people from their enemies. David was also one of those through whom God delivered his people.

2.8 So Mary grew up with this history. She knew how God had delivered Israel from Egypt. She knew that throughout their history God had repeatedly raised up people through whom he delivered his people. She knew that Yahweh was their Deliverer.

So, it is completely natural that, living under Roman rule, she would expect God to raise up a Deliverer for his people once again.

And now the angel is telling her that the child she is carrying will be the one who comes from God and who will sit on David's throne.

2.9 In other words, Mary is not thinking about all of this outside of its context. She knows these stories. She heard them and believed them. She believes the narrative that God has been developing from the very beginning, from the moment He chose the nation of Israel and throughout everything that followed.

So, when she speaks about God as her Deliverer, Mary understands that word within the broader context of everything God has done for his people throughout history.

2.10 There is one more thing I want to mention.

It is interesting to know that in the world in which Mary lived, the Greek word *sōtēr*, which means "savior," "deliverer," or "one who saves," was already known as a royal and political title. After Alexander the Great, this title was used by numerous kings and rulers in the Hellenistic world. One of the best-known examples was Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's generals and later the king of Egypt. Other Hellenistic rulers also carried the name or title *Soter*.

This is interesting because these rulers presented themselves as protectors, benefactors, and saviors of their people. But when we look at the history of the Hellenistic world, we see that these kingdoms were largely built through wars, conquests, and political domination.

Yes, some peoples and cities genuinely celebrated certain rulers as saviors, especially when a ruler freed them from an enemy or brought them some kind of benefit. But many others did not willingly accept their rule. There were rebellions, resistance, and attempts at liberation.

And that is precisely why I find this historical fact interesting. Human rulers took the title "Soter" for themselves and presented themselves as deliverers, protectors, and benefactors of their people. But many times, they were actually the opposite—they were oppressors who ruled through conquest and domination. Mary, however, is speaking about God as her Deliverer. Unlike these human rulers, God did not simply claim that title. He demonstrated it through His actions. Throughout the history of Israel, God truly delivered His people. So there is a very important contrast here between those who called themselves deliverers and the One who truly is the Deliverer.

Okay, for a moment, let's go back into history and look at some of the foundational promises God gave to Israel.

2.11 When I say 'for a moment,' I really do mean for a moment, because we will develop these promises in much greater detail in future sermons.

But for now, I want to show you a few foundational pillars that will help us understand what Mary is actually saying in her hymn of praise. In other words, once we have this broader picture of God's promises, we will understand much better why Mary speaks in exactly this way.

GOD'S PROMISES TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

3 One of the first—actually, the very first major promise through which God set His plan in motion—was the promise He gave to Abraham.

God made a covenant with Abraham. Many, many generations before Mary was born, God promised Abraham that a great nation would come from him. He promised that He would be their God, and they would be His people.

That promise was passed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob.



3.1 As we know, Jacob and his family went down to Egypt because of a great famine. Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, had become second in command in Egypt, and he invited his father and all his relatives to come to Egypt. According to Stephen's account in Acts, there were seventy-five people in all.

Over the course of generations, their family multiplied and became a great nation, just as God had promised Abraham.

But there was much more to be fulfilled regarding the promise itself. They still did not have their own land—the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. God had even given Abraham very specific boundaries for that land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the Euphrates.

So, in other words, they had become a great nation, but they were still a people living under foreign rule and being oppressed by the Egyptians.

And this happened after Joseph, his brothers, and that entire generation had died. A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph, and he no longer regarded the Israelites as people who had a special relationship with Egypt because of what Joseph had done. Instead, he saw

them as a threat because they had become so numerous. So, the Egyptians began to oppress them with forced labor.

In other words, the promise God had made to Abraham had still not been fully fulfilled.

3.2 You can read about these promises in different parts of Scripture. You have Genesis 12, Genesis 17, Genesis 26, and Genesis 28, and then Exodus, especially the first two chapters.[1]

I recommend that you read these events for yourself because they are directly connected to the covenant God made with Abraham.

3.3 After that, God made a covenant with Moses.

Sometime later, God came to a man named Moses and appeared to him in the form of a burning bush. Then he said to him: "You know what I promised Abraham many, many years ago? That I would be your God, and you would be my people? Now we are going to begin bringing that promise into reality."

3.4 God sent Moses to deliver his people from the Egyptians so that they could leave Egypt, go into the wilderness, and worship their God, Yahweh.



We can see this in Exodus 3 and Exodus 6, where God speaks to Moses and explains what is going to happen.[2]

3.5 After that, when the Israelites came out of Egypt and Pharaoh let them go, God made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai.

There he gave them instructions about what their relationship with him would look like. So, God was no longer simply saying that he would be their God and they would be his people. He was now showing them what that relationship would look like in everyday life.

[1] Genesis 12:2–3; Genesis 17:7–8; Genesis 26:3–5; Genesis 28:13–15; Exodus 1:11–14; Exodus 2:23–25

[2] Exodus 3:6–10; Exodus 3:12; Exodus 6:6–8



3.6 In short, it comes down to this: if you keep my commandments, I will bless you. If you do not keep them, the curse will come upon you. In other words, if you want to be my people, you must live according to the covenant I am making with you today.

Everything God says to Moses here is connected to what he promised Abraham long ago. But now he gives that promise greater definition. He is now explaining what the relationship between him and his people will look like in reality.

3.7 God tells Moses that the people can now go into the Promised Land. There they will live in peace. They will be protected from their enemies and will prosper in every way—spiritually, materially, physically, politically, and so on.[3]

Everything I have just described is the blessing that God would give His people if they fulfilled the condition they had agreed to. In other words, if they lived according to the covenant. That is what the blessing would look like.

The Exodus from Egypt therefore becomes a major moment in Israel's history. God brings them out of slavery, gathers them together as his people, and leads them toward the land he promised their fathers.

3.8 But Israel as a nation never followed God's law with all its heart.

I think I have already talked about this in previous sermons: there were individuals who faithfully followed God, but as a nation, as a whole, Israel never did.

From the very beginning, unfortunately, they were rebellious toward God, and because of that they went through great tribulations throughout their history.

In other words, they did not receive the blessing God had connected with obedience to the covenant. Instead, they brought upon themselves the "curse" God had also warned them about.

3.9 You can find the whole context of what I have just said in Exodus 19–24, Deuteronomy 28, Jeremiah 11, Ezekiel 20, and Amos chapter 2.

[3] Exodus 19:3–6; Exodus 24:3–8; Deuteronomy 28:1–68; Jeremiah 11:6–8; Ezekiel 20:8–9; Amos 2:4

3.10 And finally, we have the covenant with David.

After some time, God adds another part to that covenant and makes it with King David.



God promises him that kings will come from his line and that *one* of his descendants will reign forever. That king will come from David's house and will have a special role in the relationship between God and his people. Through him, God intended to lead his people and show what it looks like for a people to live under God's rule.[4]

In other words, God's agenda was that this king would be a man who loved Him with all his heart and who would lead the entire nation by his example. Through this one king, God intended to lead His people and show them what it looks like to live under His rule. When the people listened to their king and followed his example, they would be living in the relationship God had established with His people—God was their God, and they were His people.

3.11 You can read about the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17, Psalm 89, Psalm 132, Isaiah 9, Jeremiah 23, and Ezekiel 34.

3.12 Why am I giving you all of these passages? My wish is for you to understand where I am getting all these ideas from and why I am connecting them in this particular way.

When I talk about all of this, I keep coming back to one thing: the biblical narrative. I do not want to take just one verse or one book and build an idea around it. I want to show you how one coherent narrative runs throughout the entire Bible—the promises of God, the way those promises develop over time, and what those promises actually contain.

3.13 Alright.

We have also talked about the concept: "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

Let me say a little more about this, because the Davidic covenant helps us understand this concept even better.

[4] 2 Samuel 7:12–16; 1 Chronicles 17:11–14; Psalm 89:3–4; Psalm 132:11–12; Isaiah 9:6–7; Jeremiah 23:5–6; Ezekiel 34:23–24

This is roughly what the concept looks like: God says, "I will be your king. I will rule over a real, physical kingdom, over the Promised Land that I promised to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And what will that look like? I, Yahweh, will one day entrust all my authority to that *one* king who will rule over my kingdom. He will reign forever, and he will represent me, the invisible God, among my people in the visible and material world."

We know this human being today as the Messiah, as Christ.

Having said that, I want to emphasize one more important thing. God spoke very specifically to Abraham about the land he would give to his descendants. In Genesis 15:18–21, God defines the boundaries of that land and speaks about the territory that will belong to his descendants.

So we are not talking about some abstract or symbolic land, but about a real land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants.

3.14 And I believe Mary understood all of this.

She understood the entire narrative. She understood God's promises. She understood what God had promised Abraham, what he had done through Moses, and what he had promised David.

3.15 Alright, now that I have briefly explained the background of God's promises, we can return to Mary and try to understand how she, in light of all of this, viewed what was happening to her.

3.16 Mary expected God to fulfill his ancient promises. She knew what God had promised her fathers, and she knew that those promises had not yet been fulfilled in their fullness. At the same time, she was looking at a reality in which Caesar ruled over Israel. In other words, her people were still living under the rule of a foreign king.

And that is precisely why her hymn of praise is so interesting. She does not speak like someone who has no idea what is happening. On the contrary, her words show that she understands that God's promises are now beginning to be fulfilled.

And it is precisely in that context that we need to look at Mary's hymn of praise.

VICTORY OVER THE OPPRESSOR

4 So, let's move on to the next topic, which I have called "Victory Over the Oppressor."

When Gabriel tells Mary that she will be the mother of the Son of the Most High, she knows that if God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are going to be fulfilled, the Roman Empire must eventually fall. She knows this based on what she understands from the Old Testament.

4.1 Mary knows that throughout Israel's history, there have been nations that oppressed her people. The Babylonians, the Persians, and other nations ruled over Israel. But where are they now, in Mary's time?

They are gone. Their kingdoms have fallen.

In all of this, Mary recognizes the hand of God—the hand that throughout history has not allowed any earthly king to rule over His people forever. They all tried. They all ruled for a time. But only temporarily. After that, their kingdoms fell.

4.2 And as I said, she sees the hand of God in all of this.

But even though Mary can now see this, her people were not always able to see so clearly what was happening throughout their history. For generations, they lived under the rule of different kingdoms, and it was often very difficult for them to see any light at the end of the tunnel.

That is why God gave them hope through the prophets. The prophets warned them before trouble came and told them that if they disobeyed God, the curse of the covenant would come upon them. And when that actually happened, when the nation ended up in trouble or exile, other prophets would again tell them that God had not forgotten his promises.

These were words of comfort. In the midst of all these events, and even after them, they repeatedly heard the message that God would not give up on his people and that one day he would fulfill what he had promised.[5]

4.3 And here we see something else that is truly fascinating. Israel as a nation was not chosen on the basis of its own merit. Even though they repeatedly broke the covenant they had made at Mount Sinai, throughout history, God continued to move forward with His promises.

Why?

Not because of them, but because He is a holy and faithful God. In his mercy, he continued to fulfill his promises despite their unfaithfulness.

4.4 Mary now puts all of this together.

She knows the history of her people. She knows God's promises. She knows what the prophets said. And now Gabriel has told her who she is going to give birth to.

The one who will rule over Israel forever is about to be born.

4.5 Now the question is: Was Mary right to think this way?

Yes and no.

What do I mean by that?

We know today that Jesus, when he was twenty-one years old, did not take up a sword and kill the Romans. At that point, Mary did not yet have the revelation that we have today.

She would come to understand these things more fully later, after her Son died on the cross and was raised again. Then she came to understand that He would return to establish His kingdom and fulfill the promises.

4.6 But the truth she understood—that one day God would establish His kingdom through the King who would be the Deliverer of His people—will absolutely come to pass.

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[5] Deuteronomy 28:15, 36–37, 64; Jeremiah 25:8–11; Jeremiah 29:10–14; Ezekiel 36:16–28; Ezekiel 37:21–28

It did not happen in her lifetime, and to this day, God's promise has not been fulfilled in its entirety.

But when Jesus returns a second time, I believe he will establish his kingdom.

4.7 You can read about this in Acts chapter 1, Romans 11, and Revelation chapters 19 and 20.

In other words, you can study what I have just said for yourself and see whether what I am saying makes sense.

4.8 Let me summarize it all. When He returns, Jesus will defeat God's enemies, deliver Israel from its oppressors, and they will genuinely repent as a nation. For the first time since they became God's nation and entered into a covenant with Him at Mount Sinai, they will keep God's law with all their heart. Then they will live peacefully in the Promised Land.

The promise God made to Abraham, Moses, and David will finally be fulfilled.

4.9 What I am saying now may sound a little unusual to you. When we look at Israel today, we see a very strong nation, extremely capable militarily, with a great deal of influence over what is happening in the Middle East. So it may be difficult for us to imagine Israel as a nation that will once again come under the rule of an oppressor.

But we must not look at future events through the lens of what we see today. The Book of Revelation speaks of a time when ten kings will unite, give their authority to the Beast, and go to war against the Lamb. At the same time, the prophetic books of the Old Testament speak of a time when the nations will once again gather against Jerusalem, and God will intervene at the last moment and deliver His people.[6]

The very fact that we still do not see the fulfillment of everything we are talking about today actually shows us that we are not in that time yet. But history teaches us something else: the tide of history can turn very quickly. Alliances can be formed, nations can suddenly change their course, and events can unfold in ways that nobody expected. We have seen this happen many times throughout history.

THE ONLY SINLESS ONE IS THE NEW ADAM, JESUS

5 Okay. I've called the next topic "The Only Sinless One Is the New Adam, Jesus."

Let's read (Luke 1:48)

"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; for behold, from this time on all generation will count me blessed."

5.1 Why does Mary use the word "humble"?

I believe the reason is very simple. Mary was a peasant woman and had no particular social status. Her husband Joseph was a carpenter, or more broadly, a craftsman, who probably worked in nearby Sepphoris, where palaces were being built for kings.

[6] Revelation 17:12–14; Revelation 19:19–21; Zechariah 12:2–9; Zechariah 14:1–5

5.2 And that is precisely why her next words become even more interesting.

The text says: "For He has had regard."

5.3 God showed mercy to Mary and gave her a gift—one of the most important roles in the entire plan of God.

Mary would become the mother of the future king who would rule over Israel forever. And that is precisely why it is so remarkable how great an honor God gave to someone of such little social significance.

5.4 In other words she was not the wife of a high priest, a king, or someone else who held a high position within Israelite society.

5.5 But what happened to Mary was not something that appeared for the first time in God's dealings with humanity. Throughout history, God had repeatedly chosen insignificant people and given them significant roles.

Just look at King David. Who was he before he became king?

He was an ordinary shepherd, an insignificant man in the society of his time, whom no one expected to see on the throne. Saul was the king ruling over him, and David was simply one of his subjects.

And that is just one of many examples showing us that God's wisdom is not like the wisdom of this world. A person's social status or importance in society does not determine whether God will choose that person for an important role in His plan.[7]

5.6 Okay. Mary goes on to say: "All generations will count me blessed."

First, let's look briefly at how church tradition has viewed Mary.

Mary is particularly honored and called blessed in both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. The Catholic Church teaches that, by a special grace from God and through the merits of Christ, Mary was preserved from original sin from the very first moment of her conception. The Orthodox Church also calls Mary Most Holy and emphasizes her holiness and personal sinlessness, but it does not accept the Roman Catholic dogma of the sinless conception.

In both traditions, Mary is not divine and is not treated as the same as Christ. She remains a human, created being, but she is given a special place in God's plan of salvation because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, or, in traditional Christian terminology, *Theotokos*—"Mother of God"—because the one she gave birth to is the eternal Son of God.

5.7 But unfortunately, that is not the biblical perspective.

We have already talked about this. Mary was not perfect. Mary is not above us, and we do not need to honor her or pray to her.

As I said in the previous sermon, the word "blessed," means "fortunate."

[7] Judges 6:14–16; 1 Samuel 16:6–13; Amos 7:14–15; Jeremiah 1:4–8

5.8 Let me just say this: all of you who pray to Mary, as far as I am concerned, I have absolutely no problem with that. It is a matter of choice. Whether you want to or not is up to you.

Why do I have no problem with it?

Because our salvation does not depend simply on having perfect knowledge or understanding every biblical teaching correctly. What matters is the "sanctified heart" that God gives to His elect—a heart that desires to know Him, love Him, and live according to His will. So, even though the Bible does not teach us to pray to Mary, I do not believe that someone who does so because that is what they have been taught is therefore excluded from God's salvation.

5.9 We all have our rituals. We all have certain ways, certain paths through which we want to come to God, get to know Him, understand what His way is, and learn how to deal with this life we are living here.

5.10 And although I have no problem with someone honoring Mary or praying to her, throughout these sermons I have had a different desire. I wanted to show you a different Mary from the one we may have become accustomed to seeing in church tradition.

I'm sure that by now, through these sermons, you have understood what kind of Mary I am talking about. I have tried to show you Mary as an Israelite woman who loved God and his promises. As a woman who lived in a specific society and at a specific time, who knew the Scriptures and understood God's promises through them.

I have tried to show you Mary as a real woman who heard what God told her, who had to live with that decision, and who throughout her life had to grow in faith and in her understanding of what was happening to her.

This is the Mary who directs all the glory toward God and toward the Son she would give birth to—the King whom she herself will one day serve in the kingdom that will be established on earth.

Why did I want to show you precisely this kind of Mary?

Because I wanted us to be able, through Mary, through her example, her life, and her story, to better understand what we should do, how we should think, and how we should live before God.

And yes, I'm not going to lie—my desire is that you also accept this kind of Mary.

5.11 Okay. Let's return now to what Mary says: "All generations will count me blessed."

As I said in the previous sermon, the word "blessed," means "fortunate."

Let me remind us what lies behind that word "blessed."

In the previous sermon, I said this: anyone who recognizes that God has given them eyes to see and ears to hear, that God has forgiven them, and that he has given them this incredible gift—the gift that includes eternal life with King Jesus Christ—understands how blessed Mary is.

She understands this herself, and that is why she says that she is blessed and that generations will call her blessed.

5.12 And who will call her blessed? All generations.

I believe that by "generations," Mary is referring to the other children of God who will receive the same gift as her.

In other words, today, two thousand years later, I understand why she is blessed.

And that is why I also call her blessed. She is blessed—that is, Mary was chosen—not because she is by nature or status above other people, but because God gave her the same gift that he gives to others whom he calls to himself.

5.13 I call her blessed because she received the same gift I have received: eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that accepts God's promises.

And, in essence, she is my sister in Christ.

She is part of the body of Christ, just as we are part of his body. In the New Testament, the entire Church is described as the bride of Christ. That is why I do not look at Mary as someone who is above me, but as my sister in Christ.

5.14 And if what I have just said is difficult for you to accept—that I do not look at Mary as someone who is above me, but as my sister in Christ—then let's look at how other people whom the Bible presents to us as great servants of God behaved.

Let's remember the apostle Paul. Paul was a special man. God chose him to be an apostle and gave him a special role in spreading the Gospel. But what happened when the people in Lystra began worshiping him and Barnabas as gods? Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes, rushed out among the crowd, and said to them: "Why are you doing these things? We're no different from you."



Paul did not say, "Yes, I am special, so feel free to worship me." Quite the opposite. He showed them that his special role came from God and that he was only a human being.[8]

And that is precisely why I believe that throughout Mary's life, she also consistently directed attention toward God rather than toward herself. In her hymn of praise, she says: "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord." She knows that she has been given a special role, but she also knows to whom the glory belongs.

In other words, Mary did not literally tear her clothes as Paul did. But figuratively speaking, in her hymn of praise she did exactly what Paul did through his actions: she took the attention away from herself and directed it toward God.

So, I would encourage you, if you find it difficult to accept the way I am speaking about Mary here, to look at other great people whom the Bible presents to us. Whenever people tried to put them at the center, they redirected their attention toward God. In other words, their role was special, but they themselves were not the center of the story. God was the center.

5.15 Personally, I can't wait to hear Mary's story one day.

What we have in these few short verses is already fascinating. And I can only imagine how rich, great, and broad her story actually is. How much she experienced, how much she had to understand, and how many times she had to make decisions before God—difficult decisions.

One day, I believe, we will all hear her story.

And that is why this Mary feels much more real to me, much more understandable, and, personally, she is a much stronger example for me.

THE ROLE IS SPECIAL, NOT US

6 And this is where I want to emphasize once again something I see in Mary's hymn of praise: the role is special, not us.

I think only a child of God can fully understand how blessed Mary was and how great the gift God gave her really was.

6.1 As I said, Mary was an insignificant peasant woman. And that very insignificance can be seen in the way she speaks about herself. But the role God gave her was exceptionally special.

6.2 I look at my own life in the same way. God did not choose me because I was special. Rather, I am special because He chose me. That is a very important distinction.

In other words, if God has given me a role, or if he has decided to accomplish something through my life, then it is the role he has given me that is special—not me in and of myself.

And I believe Mary looks at herself in exactly the same way.

That is why she says: "My soul exalts the Lord."

[8] Acts 14:8–18; Acts 9:15–16

She does not direct attention toward herself. On the contrary, she describes herself as insignificant and directs all the glory toward God.

6.3 And this is exactly what (Luke 1:49) confirms, where Mary says:

"For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name."

In other words, Mary understands the greatness of what is happening to her. She will be the mother of the one who will fulfill God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and King David.

6.4 And why does Mary praise God so much?

Because she understands something that is now becoming increasingly clear throughout her hymn of praise:

God's faithfulness is phenomenal.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS PHENOMENAL

7 Let's slow down here and talk a little bit about "holiness." What does that word actually mean for Mary in this context? What is its definition in general, and what does it really mean for us as human beings?

7.1 When we see something great, grand, powerful, and awe-inspiring—something that, in that moment, makes us feel small in comparison to what we are looking at—it might be a mountain, the sea, the sun, or a person who holds an important political, spiritual, or royal position. Things like that often create in us a sense of humility, admiration, and deep respect for that thing or person.

7.2 Why do we feel respect for someone like that?

Not because that person is holy in and of themselves, but because we recognize the greatness of their role and authority. A king has a particular role. A priest has a particular role. Someone who holds an important position in society has certain responsibilities and authority. In other words, we look at a person through the lens of what their role represents, and then we often associate that greatness with the person themselves.

We can look at what we see in nature in a similar way. The sun has its greatness and power. A mountain has its greatness. The sea has its greatness and power. When we see what these things are capable of doing, it creates a sense of awe in us. The sea, for example, can cause enormous destruction through its power, but at the same time, it gives us human beings enormous blessings through everything the sea provides for us. The same is true of the sun and the mountains. They each have their own greatness, power, and purpose.

So, in a sense, we are in awe of the role the sea has, the role the sun has, and the role the mountain has in the world in which we live.

7.3 And that is precisely how Mary looks at God, but on an incomparably deeper level.

For Mary, God is holy. His wisdom is incredible. His creativity is incredible. His power is incredible.

Mary sees before her a God who is above every human being and above everything that has been created.

In other words, God, who is above everything else, is the One who gave each of these things its role. He gave kings their roles. He gave priests their roles. He gave the sun its role. He gave the mountains and the sea their roles. He is the One who established their place and purpose in the reality in which we live.

And Mary understands that. She understands that the reason we stand in awe of these people and these things is because the God who is above all of them gave them their particular roles and purposes.

Mary understands that she, too, has been given a particular role by this God who is above everything.

And that is why she says: "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name."

7.4 But I want to go a little deeper into what Mary is saying here.

I believe we are seeing more than Mary simply recognizing God's power. I believe Mary recognizes something that may be even more important: God's faithfulness.

Mary recognizes a faithfulness that reaches thousands of years into the past, long before she was born.

She understands that God is tirelessly and patiently, with great mercy, carrying out his promises step by step—the promises he made to Abraham, Moses, and David.

7.5 And I believe it is almost unimaginable to Mary that there could be someone who is so faithful to his promises.

And why would that be so difficult for her to imagine?

Let's think about ourselves for a moment.

How many promises have we made to people throughout our lives and then failed to keep?

Probably many.

Sometimes two or three years go by and we don't even remember what we promised someone. And when we do remember, we often find a way to explain why it didn't happen. In other words, we make excuses.

To my shame, I know how easy it is to break a promise I have made to someone. Unfortunately, I have done it many times. And I believe you have too.

7.6 But God is not like us.

He is faithful. And he fulfills his promises regardless of how much time has passed.

Mary now sees that God, through the child she will give birth to, is continuing to accomplish what he promised many, many generations ago.

And that is why God is phenomenal to her.

7.7 I can imagine Mary saying to herself:

"Oh God, after all these years, after everything that has happened throughout history, you are continuing your plan. You are now setting in motion the process through which your promises will be fulfilled. Wow. This is incredible. What kind of being would continue to stand by his promises after all this time?"

7.8 And that is precisely what Mary marvels at.

In her hymn of praise, she glorifies God because she recognizes his faithfulness.

Again, that is why she says: "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name."

In other words: "God, you are holy. You are above all of us. You are completely different from us."

7.9 Let's slow down here. I believe Mary is trying to teach us something very important through what she is saying.

She marvels at something that is not even at the center of most people's attention—God's faithfulness and his promises.

If we look at the world around us, we have to admit that most of humanity simply does not care about God's promises or about what God is doing.

That is simply the reality.

"Let God do whatever he wants. I'm concerned about my life. I'm concerned about my happiness. I'm concerned about what is happening here and now."

That is how most people think.

7.10 But God's promises were not a secondary matter to Mary.

They were more important to her than she was to herself.

And that is why she can look at what is happening and say: "God is phenomenal."

And I completely agree with her.

Because the more I get to know his promises, the more I understand them, and the more I see how they connect with one another throughout Scripture, the more I love them.

And that is why, just like Mary, I can say: God really is phenomenal.

7.11 Alright, what can we learn from all of this?

When we read the statements of people like Mary, Zechariah, and Elizabeth, we can clearly see how different their understanding of life was from what we see in the hearts of most people.

The attitude of today's culture is often: "I am the center. I am the center of my existence. And God is here to serve me. The only question is how good a servant he is."

Unfortunately, I believe a great many people think about God in exactly that way.

7.12 But let's remind ourselves again what Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah believed.

God was not an addition to their lives. His promises were not something they would fit into their personal plans if it suited them.

In other words, knowing God and his promises was more important to them than their own lives.

7.13 If we believe that we are Christians, then this is an example we should follow.

Because when a person begins to seriously believe God's promises, it changes the way they look at themselves, their lives, and the world in which they live.

7.14 That's it for today. We'll continue with Mary's hymn of praise in the next sermon.

May God give you a heart that trusts his promises, so that you too can live joyfully in this life, just as Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah did.

Amen.