

## THE GOD OF CHRISTMAS

### Part I

Luke 1:46-56 (NIV)

A man interviewed to join a mission agency. He was a gifted individual, a computer expert by profession, his talents a tremendous asset for the organization. The mission group was excited to have this person join them, and after much prayer, extended an invitation to the man.

Before the man joined the team he called the office manager and asked a question that was very important to him. The person was just leaving his company and he occupied a very high position. He wanted to know exactly what his position was to be with the mission agency so that he could type it in his new business cards. He wanted a sophisticated title and position to impress his friends and ex-coworkers.

After much consultation between the office manager and the leader of the mission organization, the decision was not to invite the man to join the team. The individual was more concerned about a great position rather than having a humble posture.

By nature, we are creatures that desire after power and prestige. We are self-centered and we do not claim to exist in broken pieces. We strive after personal success, unbending pursuits and selfish aspirations. This is how the world pays attention to us. We want to be noticed, we want to be seen. We grab the limelight by being popular and famous. Those who are unpopular and detested will be left in the dust. Those who do not find acceptance in the world are seen as losers; they live invisible existences.

Yet, there is someone who desires the humble and the broken more than the popular and self-centered. God desires those with a contrite spirit and a meek identity. We see this very clearly in Mary's song to the LORD. Mary, with Jesus in her womb, is visiting her relative Elizabeth, who at this time is carrying John the Baptist. When Mary greets Elizabeth, John leaps inside Elizabeth's womb in joy. Elizabeth is then filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaims how blessed Mary is for carrying the Messiah. (Luke 2:39-45) Mary responds back with a song of praise to God, a song where we can learn about God's love for those unloved by the world. The song is found in Luke 2:46-56:

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said:  
 "My soul glorifies the Lord  
<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has been mindful  
 of the humble state of his servant.  
 From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
 holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup>His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
 from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup>He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
 he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
<sup>52</sup>He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
 but has lifted up the humble.  
<sup>53</sup>He has filled the hungry with good things  
 but has sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
 remembering to be merciful  
<sup>55</sup>to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
 even as he said to our fathers."

There are a number of things we can learn about God from Mary's song. We will observe verses 48-51 today.

1. God **approaches those who do not deserve to be approached.** (v. 48)

We live in a world today where one needs to have great accomplishments in order to be recognized. If we do not have extravagant possessions, giftings, or talents, chances are people will not blink twice for us. I recently heard that actors who have broken arms or legs will still show up for main events such as award shows because they desire the attention they get at the red carpet. Their injuries do not prevent them from making appearances in front of the cameras. We strive to become bigger than ourselves because we want to walk down the red carpet of life. We want to be known.

And of course, the opposite of this thought is that being unrecognizable is unappealing and unpopular. Who desires to be humble when one can find power in being noticed? We are not made to be stepped on but to step on those who are weak and unlikable. People approach those who are famous but shun those who are insignificant.

What is amazing about God is that he does not follow the aberrant and wicked standards of the world. As Mary points out in her words of praise, God not only sees those who are considered by the world as "invisible," but he deliberately pursues the humble and lowly of the world.

- To be “mindful” means that God actively pursues after us.

We must consider Mary’s life condition in order to properly gauge God’s love for the unpopular and unknowable. First of all, Mary is a woman, and that does not bode well in a male-dominated society of the first century. Secondly, Mary is an ordinary Jewish person. She has no special skills in life; her goal is to marry another ordinary Jew named Joseph, whose trade is in the carpentry industry.

- God sees in each of us a special calling, even though we do not deserve his special attention.

But, such ordinariness does not dampen God’s will to use Mary anyway. This is the uniqueness of God’s character; he runs after the humble and lowly when the world discards this group so readily. God wants to approach Mary because he sees in her a special calling, and the world’s view of Mary does not sway God’s decision to use her.

And so the same is true for us today. In this Christmas season know that God is looking for you because he has an extraordinary plan for your life. Your existence means a lot to God. He does not take your life for granted nor does he see you as just taking up space. God values you and he is approaching you with a purpose for your life. God wants to establish greatness in and through you.

## 2. God’s strength **accomplishes greatness in our lives.** (vv. 48-49)

Imagine the world who once saw Mary as a nobody now views her as a blessed person. Generation after generation will testify that this Mary is no longer the same person they once knew. God, the Mighty One, has completely changed her life forever. Once ordinary, Mary is now seen in the context of greatness because of divine intervention.

- We cannot achieve any great significance without God’s intervention.

Try as hard as you may, you will never achieve greatness by your own accord. Only God can introduce greatness to us and cultivate greatness in us. And it is by the strength of God alone that greatness is accomplished through us. And the world will witness this feat as generation after generation will confirm this wonderful occurrence.

But, for God to do his work in us we must invite him into our lives and surrender our whole being under his lordship. This is what Mary speaks of when alluding to God’s mercy:

## 3. God’s mercy is given to those **who willingly submit to God’s passion and desires.** (v. 50)

- Those that fear God recognize God’s authority over them.

Mary knows that her being chosen by God is directly connected to God’s mercy alone. This is so because Mary has the fear of the LORD. This is not the same kind of fear as in being afraid or anxious about something. Rather, it is a fear when one recognizes the awesome power of God over one’s life. Mary is aware of God’s sovereignty over her life; she knows she is specially chosen to carry the birth of the Messiah. Her attitude towards God allows Mary to submit to his lordship readily and without compromise.

When we fear God we allow his lordship to reign over every area of our life. God chooses us because he has an amazing plan for us. But, in turn, we must choose him to carry out the plan. We must surrender to his divine will in order for the special calling to come to fruition.

- We experience God's compassion as we make every effort to live in godliness.

It is very important that we live in godliness as a reflection of God's calling in our lives. We must live in faith, goodness, knowledge, perseverance, self-control, godliness, kindness, and love towards our worship to God and in our service to one another. And when these qualities increase in our lives, we will become more effective and more productive in our knowledge of Jesus. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Another thing we can learn about God is this:

4. God draws the humble **inward towards himself**. (v. 51)

- God does not long for those who do not need him.

God invites the humble into a personal relationship with him. God can mold those with soft hearts and minds to be like him. But, the proud and stubborn build walls that shut God out from the molding process. Hence, God scatters them away. God does not desire after people who do not want to have anything to do with him. God cannot invest himself in lives that are unwilling to be invested into in the first place. Mary decides to open her life for God; she willingly allows God to come in and do what he thinks is right for her. She does not control God; she lets God's authority lead and guide her instead.

- But, those who want God will find themselves in a loving relationship with him.

In this Christmas season the best gift we can ever receive is to desire a loving relationship with God. When we are drawn towards God, we will experience life-changing episodes. And of course, the greatest change of all is having God dwell in us through Jesus Christ.

God is approaching you this Christmas season, and he has a great plan for you. He wants to establish greatness in and through you. But, you must eagerly surrender your whole being into the loving hands of God; you must let God shape and mold you into the person you are originally created to be. This molding process will transpire through your relationship with Jesus. Let Jesus enter your life today; allow Jesus to pull you towards himself. Do not resist but invite the greatest gift of all into your heart this very moment.

© Arthur Hsu (2005)