

## Mary Rejoices

Monica leaned against the vending machine in the break room and regrettably sipped the bad coffee from the small styrofoam cup. It was 5:30 on Christmas morning, and she was bone tired after working 12 hours in the hospital emergency room. Holidays always seemed to bring a rush of people with problems.

Monica eyed Javina, an intern physician. Granted, Javina had just come to work less than an hour ago, but still Javina was bright eyed and seemed almost luminous. The young physician was talking to two other women whom Monica did not know.

When Javina looked up and saw Monica, she waved her over.

“Merry Christmas,” Javina gushed as Monica approached the table and sat down. “I only popped in here to get some bad coffee, when I saw Erica and Charlotte.”

“And she has just been overflowing with the Christmas spirit,” interjected Erica, “and it has been a welcome delight to briefly chat with her this morning.”

“Javina is always joyful,” smiled Charlotte.

“I’ve noticed that too,” Monica added.

It was Javina’s clue, and she took it. “My joy comes from Christ, and the fact that He has made provision for my salvation. I’m so thankful to the Lord, and regardless of what happens, I rejoice in the God of my salvation. And I should be especially joyful today. It’s Christmas! Jesus has been born!”

**1.** *What are the main parts of your Christmas celebration?*

**2.** *Why should we rejoice in God our Savior?*

**3.** *How do you rejoice in God our Savior?*

## Mary Rejoices in God's Provision

*Luke 1:46-49, KJV*

46 And Mary said, My soul  
doth magnify the Lord,  
47 And my spirit hath  
rejoiced in God my  
Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded  
the low estate of his hand-  
maiden: for, behold, from  
henceforth all generations  
shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty  
hath done to me great  
things; and holy is his  
name.

*Luke 1:46-49, NIV*

<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."

Mary the mother of Jesus went to visit her relative Elizabeth during Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy that Gabriel had told her about (Luke 1:36). After seeing both Elizabeth's and even the unborn John's joyous responses to Jesus being in Mary's womb, she now knew beyond any doubt that the child she was carrying was indeed "the Son of the Most High" (vs. 32). As a result, she responded in a worship song to the God who not only could perform such miracles, but who was gracious enough to let her play a part in one of the greatest miracles of all time.

The opening of Mary's song reflects the state of her mind and heart: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (vss. 46-47; *magnificat* is the Latin word for "glorifies" or "magnifies"). Mary recognized her "humble state," and was awestruck that God too was "mindful" of it (vs. 48) but that He had nonetheless granted her the honor of bringing the Savior of all mankind into the world. God owed Mary nothing; Mary owed Him everything. But God saw Mary's heart, not her circumstances, and honored her.

Mary's song reflected one earlier song of the Old Testament in particular (see Hannah's song, 1 Sam. 2:1-10) and contained at least 12 other allusions to the Old Testament as well. It is clear from this that Mary's humility and preparation of her heart included a deep knowledge of God's Word. It is therefore no wonder that despite her youth and "humble state" (vs. 48), she was able to express her devotion so eloquently in her song.

Mary then recognized that despite her social position, God had raised her to such a place that "From now on all generations will call me blessed" (vs. 48). While some have tried to attribute additional blessings and characteristics to Mary, God had already honored Mary to a degree that few could measure up against, and Mary recognized this: "the Mighty One has done great things for me" (vs. 49). And yet, Mary's humility remained firmly in place: "holy is his name" (vs. 49). Despite Mary's obvious blessedness, only a holy, perfect, and almighty God could have performed such a miracle.

**4.** *How did Mary begin her song? How did it reflect her own humility?*

**5.** *What other evidence was there that Mary's heart had been prepared for this moment—and for this song?*

**6.** *How did Mary see herself, because of what God had done?*

## Mary Rejoices in God's Mercy

*Luke 1:50-55, KJV*

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the

*Luke 1:50-55, NIV*

<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.

proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

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, just as he promised our ancestors."

Mary's song then shifted from the personal to the universal, to all who honored God. It was not just Mary's humility that God had honored, but the humility of all "who fear him" (vs. 50). For such people, "His mercy extends . . . from generation to generation" (vs. 50). Mary's example made clear that this "fear" was not cowering or shrinking back; it was a fear expressed by humbly yet firmly accepting God's promises.

In verses 51-53, Mary contrasted God's works on behalf of the humble with His works against the proud and seemingly self-sufficient. The reference to the "mighty deeds with his arm" refers to such events as the Exodus. No power in the universe is mightier than God Almighty.

Toward those who humbly rely on Him, God "lifted [them] up . . . filled the hungry with good things." Conversely, God "scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones . . . [and] sent the rich away empty." God reveals His glory and mercy to those who refuse to glorify themselves and understood their need for mercy—and also makes His glory painfully clear to those who glorify themselves anyway. In these words we can see the

upside-down kingdom of God. Some have seen in Mary's words a moral revolution (God has scattered the prideful), a social revolution (God has brought down powerful rulers), and an economic revolution (God gives the poor great things, not the rich). That warns us still today not to follow the values that the world holds dear.

As she finished her song, Mary returned again specifically to God's promises to the nation of Israel. Despite their checkered past, God "helped his servant Israel" (vs. 54). Even when Israel as a nation failed to honor God, there were those who continued to worship and serve Him. God kept His promises to all Israel, "remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors" (vs. 54). The mention of

Abraham hearkens back to God's promise to send the Messiah through Abraham's descendants. And now, God was about to show the greatest mercy of all to His people. Through Mary, He was sending to the earth Jesus, the Savior, who would die for their sins and then return to reign forever.

**7.** *How did the focus of Mary's song change in verse 50?*

**8.** *What groups of people did Mary contrast in verses 51-53? What did she say about each group and how God responded to them?*

**9.** *How did Mary end her song?*



*Mary visits Elizabeth in this stained glass window from a church in Ohio.*

## True Rejoicing

Watching youth rejoice in the Lord at the Arts Camp sponsored by Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Saint Marc, Haiti, I could hardly believe all the hardship they had endured. Instead of being angry and bitter, they rejoiced in their God and Savior through dancing and singing. Their joy was contagious. The audience could not help but to rise and rejoice with them. The youth, who did not dance or sing, attended the camp to praise God with their skills on the soccer field. They embodied rejoicing in the Lord by giving their best as athletes.

While sitting in church with my son, I observed him quickly pull a pencil out of his pocket and start drawing on the back of the bulletin. As he skillfully drew what is in his view, the cross at the altar, the flowers and even the pastor, I realized this is his way of rejoicing in God our Savior. He uses his gift to appreciate the Gift-Giver.

Amid the chaos in our college apartment, my roommate would find a quiet corner in the house and sit down. She would close her eyes and meditate. I never saw her rejoice with shouting and singing at the top of her voice like her roommates. Instead, she chose to uniquely rejoice in God through quiet meditation.

People will try to dictate how we rejoice in the Lord, but rejoicing in the Lord should come from within us. Everyone rejoices in who God is and what He has done for them differently. God is pleased when we rejoice in ways that are authentic to who God has made us to be. There is no politically correct way to rejoice in God our Savior as long as God receives the glory and not man.

**10.** *Does rejoicing in God our Savior have to be done with other people? Explain your answer.*

**11.** *What are the benefits of rejoicing in God our Savior?*

**12.** *How do you like to rejoice in God your Savior?*

## A Daily Decision

Every morning you wake up you have a decision to make—will you choose to rejoice in God our Savior or not? It's easy to justify why you can't rejoice that day. Maybe your body is aching from disease or advancing age, your loved one or close friend just died, or you have bills you don't know how you'll pay. But what if your first thought each morning is that Jesus came at Christmas to save us, that He suffered, died, and was resurrected that we may know God through Him? The prophet Habakkuk rejoiced in spite of the terrible things happening in his country: "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18).

► *What is usually your first thought in the morning now? How can you develop a mindset of rejoicing in God your Savior every morning you wake up?*

### KEY VERSE

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. —Luke 1:46-47, KJV

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." —Luke 1:46-47, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of December 26 through January 1

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 30:1-10—God Will Bless the Faithful.
- Tues.** Deuteronomy 30:11-20—Choose Life.
- Wed.** 1 John 1:1-10—God Forgives the Penitent.
- Thurs.** 1 John 2:1-11—Christ the Atoning Sacrifice.
- Fri.** 1 John 3:1-10—We Are God's Children.
- Sat.** 2 Chronicles 7:1-11—Dedicating the Temple.
- Sun.** 2 Chronicles 7:12-22—Walk Faithfully before God.