

# Mary's Song

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everyone. Music. That's what we're going to be talking about. Because, well, this is a song, but also because music has always been often controversial throughout history.

And throughout history, certain songs have been banned. There have been songs banned by governments, illegal to sing. Some, of course, for political reasons, like, for example, in South Africa, Eddie Grant's Give Me Hope, Joanna. Remember that song?

I'm not going to sing it, but I'm sure it's in your mind. It's quite a catchy tune. But, of course, that was banned for a number of years by the apartheid government because of how it spoke against apartheid.

Other songs have been banned in history for more mundane reasons, like Lola from the Kinks. You know that one? That was banned, not because it has any explicit, you know, language or anything, but because, for the only reason, that the original recording mentioned the words Coca-Cola.

And that was illegal because it was deemed as advertising. And so they had to later change it to Cherry Cola, which is what the popular song includes, so that it was unbanned. But it might come as a surprise that included on the list of banned songs in history is this 2020-year-old song that we're looking at this morning, Mary's famous song after she learns that she's going to be the mother of Jesus, also known as the Magnificat.

[ 1 : 31 ] And this song has, too, been banned at certain times in history. I wonder if you knew that. So, for example, during the British rule of India, Mary's song was forbidden from being sung in local churches.

And then in the 1980s, the government of Guatemala banned any public reciting or singing of this song, as did Argentina for a number of years, too.

Now, a question that we would obviously be asking is, well, why would they do that? Why would they ban this ancient song that's in the Bible? It's got no references to illicit drug use that I can see. It doesn't mention Coca-Cola. So, why have governments considered this song such a problem? Well, because if you read it, you realize that it's actually a song about revolution.

I mean, listen to what it says. God has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and has sent the rich away empty.

[ 2 : 37 ] Now, these are words that rich and powerful people do not like the sound of, right? And these are words that inspire the downtrodden in societies to revolt, which they have in various times in history, like in Guatemala and Argentina and India.

These words have actually inspired revolutions or revolutionary thinking. Except, of course, what many people fail to realize when they use this song to inspire political revolution is that, yes, it is a revolution song, no mistake.

But in it, it's not people who are standing up against the rich and the powerful. It's God. God is the revolutionary in this song. And this is his manifesto.

So, you know, all revolutionaries have their manifestos, Karl Marx and whatever other revolutions, Che Guevara. But this is God's revolutionary manifesto here in Mary's song.

And that's how we should read it. Because it's telling people about the revolution that's about to happen with the coming of Jesus into the world. And that's why it's such an important song for us to understand and to get into the heart of.

[ 3 : 51 ] We probably quote it and hear it a lot during Advent, during Christmas time. But this morning, we're actually going to dig in and understand just what it's about. But to do that first, it's important to understand the context and what led up to Mary singing this song.

So we need to step into Mary's shoes for a little while and get an idea of just, you know, where she was at. What she was going through which led her to say these things.

Because, I mean, if you'd read earlier before the song that Eliel read for us, you realize she's already been through quite a lot, this girl. You know, it's not every day you get visited by the archangel Gabriel.

Gabriel, who, by the way, was the same angel that God sent to Daniel to reveal his future plans in the Old Testament. And so when you get a visit from Gabriel, you pay attention.

This is quite an important thing. And he's dealt with prophets and rulers in the past. But now he comes to this teenage Middle Eastern girl in the backwater village of Nazareth.

[ 4 : 57 ] And he tells her that she's going to be the mother of the Messiah, who the Jews had been waiting for for centuries. That's no small news.

This angel tells this teenage girl that her son is going to rule as the king of Israel, which was currently under Roman control. And that once he establishes his kingdom, it will never end. In other words, Gabriel is revealing to Mary that her son is going to be the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy.

And more than that, she's going to fall pregnant miraculously, by no ordinary means, as a virgin. Which further tells her and us that this king is going to be no ordinary king like the kings of Israel in the past who were flawed.

This king is going to be a king sent directly from God to earth. Now you can imagine, that's quite a lot to process for Mary.

[ 6 : 07 ] And it's probably quite difficult to believe. I would be having second thoughts. If I saw an angel, the first thing I'd think is, you know, what was in that food that I just ate?

You know, am I imagining this? Is this a vision? Is this an hallucination? It's really difficult to believe. And even before he tells her all the things that she hears.

And so, Gabriel goes on and says, oh, and if you doubt this, go visit your relative Elizabeth, who also, you know that old lady who's way past childbearing age?

Oh, yeah, she's pregnant as well. Now that's, in fact, some interesting links with Genesis that we've been reading over the past few months. Especially the most recent chapters we've been reading in Genesis.

Remember when God tells Sarah in Genesis 18 that he's going to bring about an impossible birth for a woman who's way past childbearing age, through which this birth God is going to establish his covenant, and he deliberately chooses a woman who can't have children, and explains it by saying that nothing is impossible for God.

[ 7 : 17 ] Remember, those are the words that were used in Genesis 18. It's a chapter that's there to show us that this is from God. This is not something that we've done. God is continuing his plans for the world.

And then we come to Luke, and we realize the same thing happens here thousands of years later. And Gabriel, telling Mary about Elizabeth's impossible pregnancy, uses almost the same words to sum it up.

In verse 37, when he says nothing is impossible with God. It's a reference back to Genesis. And it's supposed to show us, and Mary, that God is again doing what he did in Genesis.

He is again establishing and moving his covenant plans forward through a miraculous birth. And by that, he is going to continue his plans for the restoration of this world.

And that's what Mary is supposed to realize. And she's supposed to realize that all those amazing things that God is now doing and setting in motion to continue his plans for this world, she is right in the middle of it.

[ 8 : 30 ] Imagine how she would have felt. I mean, lots of people have made it their life's goal to be important, right? To make a difference. To be remembered after they're gone.

And many have succeeded in that. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon. You know, these famous people. Explorers, Christopher Columbus.

Scientists like Galileo, Isaac Newton. You know, all these great names that have changed the world, that have left a mark, that have been important. Made a big impact.

And yet God comes to this nondescript Middle Eastern teenager and says that she's going to be more important than any of them. Because she's going to be in the middle of God's plans to save this world.

And that is quite a lot to take on board, right? And so off she goes to Elizabeth. Packs up. Takes the journey to her relative, who apparently is also caught up in all this.

[ 9 : 33 ] She wants to check what's going on, just to see how true this all is. And then as she arrives in Elizabeth's home, that's exactly what she finds out. Because something amazing happens. As Mary enters Elizabeth's home, Elizabeth's unborn baby, which will later be known as John the Baptist, leaps in her womb as Mary enters that home.

Because of his job. It's his job. It's his job to herald the coming of the Messiah. Right? That's what John the Baptist is there for. That's what he was predicted to be right in the Old Testament. He's to be the person who points to the Messiah. Who says that's him. Who prepares people for his coming. And he's doing that before he's even born. It's like as Mary walks in.

It's like John in the womb is nudging his mom and going, there he is. That's him. Well, that's his mom. But he's inside her. You know, it's an amazing, miraculous event.

And just that baby moving at that particular time and Elizabeth realizing what it means. Something remarkably supernatural is going on when Mary enters Elizabeth's home.

[ 10 : 48 ] And then something more happens. Elizabeth herself makes a prophecy. In other words, she says something that requires knowledge beyond what she could have known herself.

She says these words in verse 43. Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Amazing words from a woman who didn't know.

I mean, we have no reason to believe that Mary told anyone about her pregnancy. And yet not only does Elizabeth know that she's pregnant, but Elizabeth knows that her Lord and Master is inside her.

And so if Mary was unsure before, now she's got no doubt. This is really happening. She's going to bear the Messiah. And that realization is what leads her to then sing this famous song, which we're going to now look at in more detail.

So let's look at this song from verse 46 to 55. Now that we understand just what led up to it, let's see what it actually says. Firstly, notice how Mary begins.

[ 12 : 02 ] This is quite important. She begins by saying, My soul glorifies or magnifies the Lord. That's in fact where the name Magnificat comes from.

Magnify. So it's a song. She, right from the beginning, she says the purpose of the song, what I'm saying now, is meant to tell you something about God. It's meant to put something in focus about God.

It's meant to magnify God and what he's doing in this world. It's meant to put it under the microscope, if you like. That's Mary's whole purpose. To magnify something God is doing. To take her eyes off her and to take our eyes off her and what's going on in her life and to focus our attention on God who is doing it all.

That's what she wants. I reckon she would be horrified if she knew over history how she's been magnified instead of God.

It's the very opposite of what she wanted. But also, she's not just magnifying God and lifting our attention to God and what he is doing in history.

[ 13 : 13 ] She's also rejoicing. She's also just celebrating in this song. She has real joy that she wants to share. She said, I rejoice.

And sometimes, of course, we know the best way to share joy is through music, right? It has this amazing ability, music, to transmit emotions, to express how we're feeling, but then also to actually share those emotions.

Is there a way that you can take your emotion and give it to someone else and put it inside someone else? Yes, there is. God invented a way to do that. It's called music. It's amazing, isn't it? I mean, how could you stay sad when listening to Walking on Sunshine and Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys?

You know, songs like that. You can't not get a little happier. Well, in the same way, Mary wants to not just communicate information to us in the song.

Even though we read it without music, it is originally a song. And so that means that Mary wants to share with us the joy that she has because of all that God is doing, which she then goes on to give reasons for.

[ 14 : 26 ] So she starts by saying, I want to magnify God. I'm rejoicing. I want you to share my joy. And this is why. This is why. And then she lists what God has done in the rest of the song. And right there, in fact, is a lesson for us.

It's a very important lesson. Because do you ever find yourself joyless? We all do, don't we? We find ourselves at times just, there's no joy.

There's nothing to be excited about. But have you ever considered that the reason we lack in joy in our daily lives is because we lack in thanks to God for all that he has done.

And recognition of what he is doing in our lives. So maybe let's take a page out of Mary's book here and get into the habit of listing all that God has done for you.

That's what she's doing. She's making a list. Of what God has done. Checking it twice. But it's a lesson for us.

[ 15 : 34 ] We don't do that enough. I don't think we actually sit down and consciously go through what God has done in the gospel. What God has done throughout history. And what God has done for his people, us.

If we do that, and even better, if we listen to good Christian music and Christian hymns that have been designed to list those things. And communicate them to us.

We can't stay sad. So let's take a bit of advice from Mary and get into that kind of habit in our own lives. Okay, so then Mary is rejoicing in what she's discovered about God.

And she's wanting to share all of that with us. But what is that that she's wanting to share? Well, to sum up her song, if you had to kind of boil it down to its main point.

Mary's song is all about God's revolutionary mercy. God's revolutionary mercy. Because mercy is in fact a word that appears quite prominently in the song.

[ 16 : 36 ] And it splits really the song into two halves. And it talks about mercy in two particular areas. First, in verse 46 to 50, it talks about God's mercy to Mary. And then in verse 51 to 55, the second half of the song, it talks about God's mercy to Israel.

And we're going to look at each of those in turn. So first, God's revolutionary mercy to Mary. Look at verse 46 to 50 in your Bibles. My soul glorifies the Lord.

And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has been mindful of the humble estate of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed.

For the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. And let's just pause there.

As we look at this God's mercy to Mary. And it's seen here in lifting this girl up from a place of insignificance to a place of significance.

[ 17 : 44 ] That she could never have done herself. Right? She could never have in, no matter what she did as a Middle Eastern peasant girl from Nazareth. She could never have become as important as God made her.

She had no significance. No influence. And yet God is now giving her a great name. She says, from now on, all generations will call me blessed.

Does this remind you of something else from Genesis? Let's see how much you remember. Remember Abraham? God's promise to him in Genesis 12?

A man who, as we've seen, was an Iraqi goat herder. He had no significance in and of himself. And yet God comes to him and promises him a great name which he could never have got himself.

Because, as we learned in Genesis, that is what God is in the business of doing. God is in the business of making nobodies into somebodies. And he's doing it again.

[ 18 : 52 ] And so that's the first way that God is a revolutionary. Because, you know, in our world, the world we live in, you can only be a somebody if you make yourself a somebody.

If you're rich or famous or successful or particularly skilled or good at sport or whatever it is, everybody is rushing around trying to be a somebody through what they do.

That's what this world is. That's how this world is programmed. That's how it's wired. That's the world we're born into. You've got to make yourself a somebody. You've got to be successful.

And that's what people are busy trying to do. But the gospel, then we open up and we read and it tells us that the opposite is actually true in God's economy. God turns that whole idea on its head.

The gospel tells us that those who think that they can be somebodies in God's eyes through what they do end up being nobodies. But it also tells us that those of us who realize that by ourselves we are nobodies, unable to be who we should be, those are the people who God makes into somebodies.

[ 20 : 05 ] Because those are the people who come to Jesus and submit to him and so enter into citizenship in God's eternal kingdom and have their sins forgiven through his death on the cross.

And they submit to him because they know they need him because without him they are nothing. That's the definition of a Christian. Someone who realizes they are nothing without Jesus. Nobody's. Who God makes into somebodies. That's what he's in the business of doing. God is a revolutionary. Every day. Well, of course, the people in this world who think that they're somebodies, the song tells us, those who are self-sufficient and try to make a name for themselves, what happens to them?

What does the song tell us happens to those people who are trying to be important in their own strength, trying to make a name for themselves? Well, the same thing that happened to the humans who try to make a name for themselves at the Tower of Babel.

Look at verse 51. God scatters them. God scatters those who are proud. Or as Psalm 138 puts it, God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

[ 21 : 30 ] Or as Jesus himself puts it, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. You see, throughout the Bible, God is showing us that there's this reversal that he's going to do.

He did it at Babel, but he continues to do it. And ultimately, he does it in the gospel. This great reversal of making somebodies into nothings, and nothings into somethings. And so what that means, good news for you and I, is that the only qualification you need to receive God's grace and favor, and to be a somebody, and to enter into eternal life, and to receive all the benefits of God's great promises, the only qualification you need, is to realize that you don't deserve it, and that without Jesus you are nothing.

That's what Mary means when she sings in verse 50. His mercy is for those who fear him. Not for those who lift themselves up.

Not for those who see God as their equal, or see themselves as gods of their lives, like so many people do in today's culture. But his mercy is for those who fear him.

Who realize that he is God, and that without him, we are nothing. So the first question I want to ask you this morning is, do you fear him?

[ 23 : 02 ] Do you realize you deserve nothing but his judgment for your sins? And do you repent and come to him for mercy? Because if you do that, the gospel says you will surely get it.

You will surely get his mercy and so much more, because of what Jesus did on the cross to pay for your sins. If you repent, and you trust in him. And that is the first way God shows his revolutionary, revolutionary mercy to this world in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In what he does with individuals, taking them from nothing and making them something. But there's another way, a bigger way, that God shows his revolutionary mercy in this song, and that is his mercy to Israel.

Let's have a look from verse 51. See what Mary sings. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things. But he has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he spoke to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.

[ 24 : 15 ] So why is Mary talking about Israel? Why has she got all political now? Well, because Gabriel told her that her son is going to be the king of Israel.

And through him, God's promises to expand the nation of Israel to grow and bless the whole earth, which they failed to do in the Old Testament, are now going to happen and going to be fulfilled.

In other words, God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 for him to be a great name and a great nation and to be a blessing to all nations is still going to happen. That plan is still on track, Mary.

God is telling her. But of course, the reason that this is such a revolutionary idea for her is because at the moment when she sung that song, Israel was a mere colony of the greatest empire the world has ever known.

The Romans. And these are people you do not mess with. Romans. And they are powerful. They took over almost all of the known world at that time.

[ 25 : 26 ] And it wasn't just them, though, who humbled Israel. Israel's whole history, up until that point, was a story of being pushed around by one powerful nation after another.

The Egyptians. Then the Babylonians. Then the Assyrians. Now the Romans. They weren't an impressive nation, economically speaking.

They didn't have the raw materials or the population or the land to be a big, impressive empire like Rome or Assyria.

Abraham's family throughout history was looked down upon, even laughed at. And yet God promised that one day they would inherit the whole earth.

And the Israelites, you know, in Mary's time had pretty much lost hope. They were still kind of looking back to that promise but they were wondering, yeah, I don't know, maybe God's not going to do it.

[ 26 : 31 ] He's changed His plans or He's forgotten about us. I don't know. Because it certainly didn't look like Israel was going to inherit the whole earth in Mary's time.

But now, based on what this angel has told her and based on what she's seen through Elizabeth and her visit with Elizabeth, she knows that God has not forgotten His plan.

God has not changed His mind. He hasn't neglected His promises. His plan is still on track like it always has been. Just in His time. The kingdom is still coming because the king was growing inside her.

And so she knew that. But of course then, as that king grows up, it still doesn't look like the promise will be fulfilled.

He doesn't turn out to be the kind of king the Jews expected. He doesn't overthrow the Romans like they wanted. What's going on? Is He really the king?

[ 27 : 32 ] But of course, the reason that He doesn't come and overthrow their enemies that were in their face was because the first time He came, He came to overthrow a much more threatening enemy that they hardly knew about.

A much greater threat to His people than the Romans and that was their sin. their true enemy. And He defeated that enemy that had cut them off from God and His favor.

Cut them off from God's plans. Jesus came to defeat that enemy not with war horses and swords and chariots but by dying on a Roman cross for the sins of His people which paid the price for those sins and made His people who trust in Him and submit to Him righteous in God's sight.

That's what happened on the cross. He died there to defeat His people's greatest enemy so that they could become part of His eternal kingdom. But that wasn't the end of the story.

After that mission was completed we read in the Gospels He rose again from the dead and not only that to show that He had defeated death to prove that He had defeated death He rose from the dead but then He ascended and took up His throne the throne of the King of Israel in heaven and is one day certainly going to return to establish His kingdom on earth.

[ 29 : 00 ] There will be a second advent. and when He does that when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth just as God's plan has always been it's not going to be the political Israel we know today who's trading rockets with Palestine but it's going to be the true Israel people from every tribe and every nation who submit to the true King of Israel Jesus Christ will be part of that nation part of Abraham's family.

who will one day inherit the whole earth and so for those people today those who submit to the true King of Israel Jesus Christ who is on His throne now for them all of God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament of land and of blessing are still certainly going to be fulfilled.

those promises haven't passed away. It's not like the New Testament is more valid or appropriate for Christians than the Old Testament.

No, because all the Old Testament promises to Israel now count for us if we submit to the King of Israel. even if it doesn't look like it's going to happen right now like it didn't for Mary like it didn't for Israel but we are in the last stage of history you know the Bible actually lays out God's plan of history from Genesis to Revelation and there's various stages various things that happen throughout God's plan and we're in the very last stage the very last stage of history nothing more needs to happen before the return of Christ and the restoration of this world from curse back to blessing and the only reason God is still delaying that event the only reason God is still relaying the return of the rightful king of the world back to claim his territory is because

God wants to give people of all nations a chance to get on the right side of that king before he comes that's the only reason we're still waiting and that's what we should be involved in if we're Christians helping people to get on the right side of the king before he comes and before he takes down the powerful and proud who currently rule this world and lifts up his humble people to take their place which we will do that that's going to be the greatest revolution political revolution this world has ever seen it's going to make Shea Guevara look like a girl's guide and so what does this

mean for you Christian how can you apply these truths of Mary's song to your daily life well first don't feel like you need power or status or importance now don't feel like you need to make yourself a someone because if you are a member of the covenant if you are a child of

[ 32 : 08 ] Abraham through faith in Christ then you are already someone you already have a name that God has given you you don't need to seek a name here for yourself you will inherit this earth Jesus says and you will live in the kingdom that has no end so what do you really need now what are you really chasing after now what's the point you have you already have everything you could want so don't spend your life chasing after things that are going to be burnt up anyway because a revolution is coming know that live every day with that knowledge a revolution is coming and all who have accumulated much in this world will lose it while those who are willing to lose what they have here for their king they'll get it back a thousand fold and so if you really believe that don't chase after what this world can give you be willing to give up what you have for the sake of your king the second way you can apply these truths is by showing displaying

God's revolutionary mercy God's upside down mercy to the people around you and the community that you live in because we live in a world where the rich are more valuable than the poor let's be honest we give people attention based on how useful or important they are to us in our life how skilled they might be how much they can do for us that's the way the world works and so I think it's very important to remember God sees things the other way around and so should we God is not impressed by riches or importance or pomp or ceremony and neither should we his people therefore look at others by the world's standards we need to break out of looking at the world and looking at our neighbors the way the world tells us to because God looks at them the other way totally different way we must be revolutionaries like he is showing a kind of mercy that turns this world on its head going out of our way to uplift the down and out giving grace to those that the world ignores giving time and attention to those who are not important those who can't do much for you make friends with that kid at school that no one likes spend time getting to know that colleague in the office that everyone else ignores in accounting because he sits there in the corner people think he's boring and nobody knows him take time to stop and talk to that beggar and learn his story see what you can do practically to help him more than just giving him some money to get rid of him because that's the kind of revolutionary living that God's people are called to to imitate him the great revolutionary and that's what Jesus displayed when he was on earth not only was he the son of a humble carpenter and his teenage wife in the dusty village of

Nazareth that nobody thought was important at all but he spent time Jesus deliberately you read through the gospels he deliberately sought out and spent time with the downtrodden the down and out the people of no repute in society and he was scandalized because of it but he did that because that's the kind of living that will change this world as we do that as we follow our king and imitate him that's the kind of living that will change our communities better than any political revolution could do and you know what as God's people we can live in that crazy upside down way giving up our time and resources that we would otherwise spend on ourselves because we know what the future holds when our king comes back so we don't need to hold on to this stuff and so we look forward to that day and as we do as we look forward to that day of revolution that is coming let's make

Mary's revolution song our song and let it inspire you as you read it this Christmas season and I hope you will read it over and over again and as you do let it inspire you to live in a way that shows God's unexpected and revolutionary mercy to the people that you come into contact with as we serve our Lord who is coming back let's pray Lord Jesus we do thank you for your mom's song that she sang and that was recorded for us Lord Jesus we know that you are the king of the world who is coming back to establish your throne to put into effect the greatest revolution the world has ever known and so Lord help us to live as revolutionary showing God's revolutionary mercy to this world and warning people of your coming so that they would be on the right side of you when you come help us this

Christmas season especially to use the season as a way of magnifying you in Jesus name we pray amen amen Thank you.