**My Soul Magnifies the Lord**

Based on [Luke 1:39-56](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk1.39-56)

Preached on December 20, 2015

Advent 4

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On our text, Mary sings a song of praise to God. She sings because she is blessed to carry in her womb the Son of God. Historically, the Church has called Mary’s Song the “Magnificat,” which is the Latin word for “to make bigger”—like a magnifying glass. Mary sings, “**My soul magnifies the Lord**.” How can it be that Mary’s soul makes the Lord bigger? How can anything make the Almighty God bigger? Martin Luther reminds us that there is nothing so big that God is not bigger; nothing so small that he is not smaller.

In one sense Mary magnifies the Lord the same way all Christians do, through her song. Anytime we sing or spread the Word of God, we make him bigger in a world that barely gives him any attention at all. God is still a great big God, but we struggle to see him because our eyes look for God in the great and mighty things of the world. **But faith sees God in what is low and despised, what is weak and humble. And this is the hidden wisdom of God that is taught by the spirit and spiritually discerned** (1 Corinthians 3:6-16). God hides himself in weakness; he shrouds himself in suffering, his glory is veiled in humility. This is seen not with the naked eye, but as Hebrews says, **Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen**; and 2 Corinthians 5:7 **we walk by faith not by sight**.

So Mary’ soul magnifies the lord. And she sings how God has exalted those of humble estate. She is talking about herself. Mary is a very young woman, thought to be between 14 and 16 years old. She’s from Nazareth, which is nothing to boast about. She is a nobody, and she rejoices. **She is nothing special and she sings how God used her, *a nobody*, to bear in her womb the Saviour of the world.** She sings, “He who is mighty has done great things for me.” She did not deserve such an honour, that is why she is called blessed among women. There is no doubt here, and elsewhere in the scriptures that **all good things are a gift from God, undeserved, unearned, pure mercy and grace**.

It’s not just that Mary is a nobody in a world of “somebodys.” The truth is we are all nobodys except for this: that God loves us and shows us mercy. God doesn’t love us because we’re lovable; we are loveable because he loves us. We are not blessed because we are special, we are special because we’re blessed. God does not show grace to the gifted; His grace bestows our gift.

In the Catechism, the explanation of the first article of the apostles creed is this: *I believe that God created me and all things, he has given me my body soul, eyes ears and all my members, my reason and all of my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me food, drink clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and* ***all I have****. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.* ***All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.*** *For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true*.

Why did God choose Mary, because she was nothing, had nothing, deserved nothing, added nothing to God’s plan of salvation. He chose her because she was weak and humble and there is nothing we can attribute to God choosing her for such an honour except her weakness. And that’s the paradox, nobody tries to be weak; people try to be humble, but it's a false humility, an act. But Mary is humble, empty, has nothing. And so when she is gifted in her womb with the Saviour, her soul magnifies the lord in the way that a desert magnifies an oasis; or darkness magnifies the moonlight, or the way tight clothing magnifies obesity…by contrast, by incongruity. You notice faith is most magnified when it is shown in the midst of suffering. Job's faith was proved when it was tested with fire. Abraham's faith was shown when he obeyed the Lord and did not spare his own son. When someone suffers with confidence in the Lord, when someone confesses Christ with their last cancer-laden breath, or on pain of death, that is when the Lord is magnified before the world.

That is why, as John the Baptist says of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Jesus must be magnified, and he does so by taking on the form of a servant, by making himself nothing! **Is there any greater contrast than the crux of our salvation, to know that this unborn infant grows to be man, the almighty God in human flesh?** In him is life and light, and he is magnified upon instrument of death on a day of darkness, hanging in agony, pouring out his own blood for your sin and for the sin of the whole world while his mother stands at his feet, still weak and helpless and empty as a sword pierces her very same soul that magnifies the Lord.

But this is how the Holy Spirit reveals the things of God. The gospel of life and salvation is magnified against the backdrop of this law death and hell. So Jesus says in John’s gospel, **Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so too must the Son of Man be lifted up.** He says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself** (John 12:31-32). The love of God is magnified in the most unlikely of placed, lifted up in death and suffering on the cross. Because He is God, and he doesn’t need worldly glory and strength to help him accomplish his purpose here. It is the lord gives and the Lord who takes away; the lord casts down the mighty and exalts the humble; **He is the Lord and there is no other, besides Him there is no God. He forms light and creates darkness, He makes well-being and creates calamity. He is the Lord, who does all these things** (Isaiah 45:5,7).

God created all things from nothing; so too he prepares salvation from nothing, from a nobody…and that’s no insult to Mary, for he himself becomes a nobody a baby born of a virgin which to the world means conceived in sexual immorality, a bastard son. Born in bethlehem ephathra, least of the cities of israel, raised in Nazareth where nothing good comes. And he does it all for nobodies, and that’s no insult to us. For the wonderful peaceful news of the gospel is that God saves nobodies. “**He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate**.” God has no use for somebodys, we don’t audition for his favour until he chooses someone strong enough among to serve him. He chooses, He saves, He magnifies himself by placing his glory against the backdrop of humility. By placing salvation in the weak to save the weak. He does it all.

God does it all. And so when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and greets her, she is filled with the Holy Spirit and the baby in her womb leaped for joy. A baby leaped for joy. **Is there anything more weak or more humble that a baby?** How about an *unborn* baby, a class of persons so weak and helpless that they don’t even receive government protection and human rights. Unborn babies, persons who cannot survive on their own but are utterly dependent upon their mother’s womb. So helpless and weak so that a majority of people in western civilization don’t even regard them as fully human. And yet God, as is His wont, worked the joy of faith in the unborn nobody in Elizabeth’s womb, not yet a face to be seen, not yet a name to be known by, and when Mary, the ark of Jesus, greets her cousin with a word from the Lord, the Holy Spirit is sent forth and the unborn baby magnifies the lord with Joy. The Holy Spirit does all, the baby adds nothing receives everything.

Beloved in the Lord, Mary sings that her soul magnifies the Lord. Certainly she has joy because God gave her such special attention. Certainly, Mary rejoices because an angel of the Lord came to her and now she can’t help but sing out what the Lord has done. **But more than that, Mary’s soul magnifies the lord because through her flesh, God is made visible to the world.** God is made man in the flesh of her womb, the invisible God is incorporated, given a body. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Now, through this miraculous conception in the virgin Mary, we are able to see God himself. When Mary says, “**My soul magnifies the Lord” (1:46) it’s true**, because through *her*—through *her* flesh—God has become incarnate and made himself visible to us.

Lent and Easter is a wonderful season where we see the culmination of God’s pivotal work on earth—that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins. God died for us. But at Advent and Christmastime we celebrate an equally and in some ways even more Glorious truth: **that—by becoming man in Jesus—God prepared for himself a body making Himself available for that death, and visible to the eyes who saw that body raised and glorified and ascended on high to rule all things by the Word of his power.** God grant that we magnify these truths in all we say and do, in the carols we sing and in the word of faith we proclaim this advent and Christmas season. AMEN.