Mary's Song of Praise
Luke 1:46-56
SS Lesson for 12/08/2013

Devotional Scripture:  Ps 111

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Introduction

**Overview and Approach to Lesson**

The lesson examines Mary's Song of Praise. The study's aim is to see that God's Person and works are worthy of magnifications by word and deed. The study's application is to challenge the heart to focus on God and be glad that He is in control.

**Key Verse:** Luke 1:46-47

46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

**Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary**

After learning of the sign, Mary... hurried to see Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in a town in the hill country, which probably referred to the hilly region surrounding Jerusalem. As Mary arrived, Elizabeth’s baby leaped in her womb for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Zechariah also was later filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 67). Prior to the day of Pentecost, believers were filled with the Holy Spirit for specific tasks. Elizabeth’s loudly spoken words, Blessed ("well spoken of") are you among women, carry the idea that Mary is the most honored of all women. Elizabeth called her the mother of my Lord. In Luke the term “Lord” (kyrios) often describes Jesus. It has a double meaning. “Lord” would be more important for a Greek reader than would the term “Christ” (meaning “Messiah”), for the Gentiles had not been anxiously awaiting the Messiah. On the other hand the Septuagint often used the word “Lord” (kyrios) to translate Yahweh. Again (v. 45) Elizabeth said Mary was blessed ( “happy”) because she believed what God had told her. This suggests that Mary visited Elizabeth not with a skeptical attitude but rather joyously, to confirm what had been announced to her. In response to the situation at hand Mary recited a song which praised God’s favor on her and her people. “The Magnificat,” as the song is called, consists almost entirely of Old Testament allusions and quotations. The same is true of the songs of Zechariah and Simeon (vv. 1:68-79; 2:29-32). Mary’s song has similarities to Hannah’s song (1 Sam. 2:1-10). First, Mary praised God for His special favor on her (Luke 1:46-50). Mary saw herself as part of the godly remnant that had served Yahweh. She called God my Savior showing an intimate acquaintance with Him. She spoke of His faithfulness (v. 48), power (v. 49), holiness (v. 49), and mercy (v. 50). Second, Mary praised God for His special favor on Israel (vv. 51-55). Through the Child that she was to bear, God was being merciful to Abraham and his descendants. Mary was aware that the birth of her Child was a fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham and his people. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, apparently until John was born (cf. v. 36). Mary then returned home. The Greek has the words “her home,” indicating that she was still a virgin and was not yet married to Joseph.

**Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

The key verse text marks the beginning of what is often called the Magnificat. The term "Magnificat" comes from the Latin translation of the first word in the original word order of this great song of praise. It is translated here as "magnify." Mary was magnifying God because of what she had learned about her yet unborn child — He would be the long-expected Messiah, sent into the world by God. What follows in the song is Mary's grateful and thoughtful response to this news. It is a response of worship and praise. It is the magnification of God's power and grace. The text is Mary's simple yet powerful statement that she intended to praise and rejoice in the Lord over what He was doing. And she went on to do so. When she finally met up with Elisabeth, she burst forth with the whole glorious song of praise found in Luke 1:46-55. It is doubtful that Mary simply made up the whole song on the spot. We see from the text that her words of worship and praise came from deep within her, from her soul and from her spirit. Being full of Scripture and full of God, her inner life was soaring. Much of the text of the song alludes to passages in the Old Testament. Devout Jews of Mary's time often learned the Scriptures through memorization and recitation. Mary was likely steeped in Old Testament truth. What probably happened is that as Mary was at home in Nazareth and then as she traveled from her home to the hill country of Judah, she meditated...
upon Scripture, reflecting on what God was doing through her. When her words came out, they were measured and thoughtful. She had begun to grasp the greatness of the promises that had been made to her by the angelic visitor. The Messiah was coming, and God had given her the privilege of bringing Him into the world! As a devout Jew, Mary no doubt knew of the long-expected Messiah and the biblical promises of His coming. That it was being fulfilled in her life was almost beyond comprehension. The term for "magnify" is in the present tense, indicating that Mary was in an ongoing state of magnifying the Lord. Whenever a person firmly grasps the workings of God in salvation, it leads to praise and worship. Worship and praise naturally flow from a life that God has touched. That is why we sing our songs to God, taking the themes from Scripture as we ponder and remember what He has done for us in Christ. This is what Mary was doing. She was praising God for His power and the goodness, salvation, and grace extended to her. This is worship and praise on the most basic and personal level. What a glorious picture of praise we have here for this Christmas season! Mary was a young woman in a vulnerable position—pregnant, with a not very believable explanation to give to others concerning her situation. But resting on the promises of God, her heart was overwhelmed with His goodness and grace. Mary was praising God despite difficult circumstances. When we rest upon the promises of God and our hope in Christ, when we feed our souls with His Word, we too will burst forth in praise and worship despite the challenges of our circumstances.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson was adapted from a previous SS Lesson dated 12/25/2011 and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

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Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

As befits the story of the Messiah's coming, Luke's Gospel includes four songs (or what are traditionally identified as songs) that celebrate what God did in sending his Son (1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:14; and 2:29-32). We might say that Luke wrote the first Christmas musical! In so doing, he captured for all time the deepest feelings evoked by the momentous event of Christ's arrival. Today's lesson focuses on the first of the four songs.

Today's text is part of the account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, who became the mother of John the Baptist (Luke 1:39-45; see last week's lesson). Both women became mothers of children conceived by God's miraculous intervention, and both children became instrumental in fulfilling God's promises. But Mary's child was inherently superior, and so Elizabeth hailed her as "the mother of my Lord" (v. 43). The focus of attention was not on the mothers, but on their children—especially Mary's child—and what God was to accomplish through them. Mary responded to Elizabeth's greeting with the song that is today's text. Like the Psalms and other poetry of the Old Testament, it derived its poetic qualities not from meter or rhyme, but from the expression of ideas in parallels. Two, three, or more statements follow one another to express similar concepts, creating a lyrical effect that conveys both thought and feeling. The themes of Mary's song are familiar to readers of the Old Testament. Mary adapted traditional expressions of hope in God's promises as she reacted to God's announcement that he was about to fulfill those promises. Mary's song most closely resembles Hannah's prayer of praise after the birth of Samuel (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10). For the Old Testament poets and prophets, the days when God would fulfill his promises lay in the uncertain future. Those poets and prophets could not say when or how God would fulfill his pledge to bless his people, restore them to himself, and make all nations
his. They could only affirm God's faithfulness: if he has made a promise, then he will fulfill it—period. In times of distress, hope is to be found in God's rock-solid faithfulness. In contrast with the Old Testament poets and prophets, Mary stood at the very threshold of fulfillment. She was pregnant with the child through whom God would act to do what he had promised. But the fulfillment of God's promise came at a cost: she was burdened with a pregnancy that appeared to all to be the result of sexual immorality. And beyond the birth of her child, she too could not say how God would go about fulfilling his pledge. Even so, she could, like the saints before her, celebrate God's faithfulness.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

**Song of Praise Glorifying God (Luke 1:46-50)**

46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.
50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.

In worship (46-47)

Worship God by exalting His Holy Name (Psalms 34:3)

3 Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

Worship God in song and thanksgiving (Psalms 69:30)

30 I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.

Worship God with joy, gladness and thanksgiving (Ps 100:2-4)

2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Worship God through the Scriptures, but be sure to seek and experience Him personally (John 5:38-40)

38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Worship during calamities (Job 1:18-20)

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" 20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship
Worship by bringing an offering (Ps 96:8-9)
8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. 9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

Worship by rejoicing in God (Phil 4:4)
4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

With humility (48)

Humility that comes through the fear of God (Prov 15:33)
33 The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

Humility because of being God's chosen (Col 3:12)
12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Humility of spirit (Prov 16:18-19)
18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Humility as we walk with God (Mic 6:8)
8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Humility glorifying God like an innocent child (Matt 18:2-4)
2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Acknowledging God's works and holiness (49)

Acknowledging God for what He has done (Ps 52:9)
9 I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints.

Acknowledging God for His deeds (Ps 9:11)
11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the people.

Acknowledging God for His ways (Ps 77:12-13)
12 I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God?

Acknowledging God for His holy Name (Ps 105:1-3)
Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! 3 Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!
Acknowledging God's mercy (50)

*Mercy that is great (Ps 5:7)*

7 But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple.

*Mercy for the wicked who have forsaken their ways (Isa 55:7)*

7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

*Praise for God's richness of mercy (Eph 2:4-5)*

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

*Praise for God's saving mercy (Titus 3:5)*

5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

*Praise God because He is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:11)*

11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

*Mercy that has given us a new birth (1 Peter 1:3)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

**Song of Praise About God's Faithfulness (Luke 1:51-56)**

51 He has shown strength with His arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
54 He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."
56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

**Faithful in His power (51)**

*Faithful because God's power is majestic (Ex 15:6-7)*

6 "Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. 7 In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble.

*Faithful because God's power is great and awesome (Deut 7:21)*

21 Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God.

*Faithful because God's power should cause the fear of God (Josh 4:24)*

24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God."
Faithful because God's power is known (Ps 62:11-12)

11 One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, 12 and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.

Faithful because God's power causes His enemies to cringe (Ps 66:3)

3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

Faithful because God's power is mighty (Ps 147:5)

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Faithful because God's power cannot be turned back (Isa 14:27)

27 For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

Faithful because through God's power Jesus was raised from the dead (1 Cor 6:14)

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

Faithful in His justice (52)

The justice of God was demonstrated through His forbearance of sin (Rom 3:25-26)

25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

The justice of God is right (2 Thess 1:5-6)

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.

The justice of God will be accomplished to both the righteous and the wicked (Eccl 3:17)

17 I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

The justice of God will be done for His chosen ones (Luke 18:7)

7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

Justice from God who is perfect (Deut 32:4)

4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

God dispenses justice every day (Zeph 3:5)

5 The Lord within her is righteous; he does no wrong. Morning by morning he dispenses his justice, and every new day he does not fail, yet the unrighteous know no shame.


38 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.
Faithful in His provisions (53-54)

Provision of food (Ps 111:5)
5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

Provision for the poor (Ps 68:10)
10 Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.

Provision of redemption (Ps 111:9)
9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever — holy and awesome is his name.

Provisions that meet needs (Phil 4:19)
19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Provision of grace (2 Cor 9:8)
8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Faithful in His trustworthiness (55-56)

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He has never forsaken those who seek Him (Ps 9:10)
10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He is the Rock eternal (Isa 26:4)
4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He is our God (Ps 31:14)
14 But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."

God is faithful in His trustworthiness to those who commit their way to Him (Ps 37:5-6)
5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He is our help and shield (Ps 115:11)
11 You who fear him, trust in the Lord — he is their help and shield.

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because those who put their trust in God endure forever (Ps 125:1)
125 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He is our strength and salvation (Isa 12:2)
2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

God is faithful in His trustworthiness because He cares for us (Nah 1:7)
7 The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,
Mary’s Magnificat - Mary seems immediately to respond to the praise of Elizabeth by offering her own praise to God. While we are not specifically told that Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit when she spoke these words, we may surely assume so. Perhaps there is a hint here that the words of Mary’s hymn are divinely inspired, but that the work is her composition, her work of praise and devotion, in response to the revelation of the angel. Elizabeth’s words are not as reflective, but seem almost to explode from her lips unexpectedly. While Elizabeth spoke with “a loud voice” (1:42), Mary is perhaps more sedate. Regardless, these are some of the most beautiful words in all the word of God. Let us ponder them.

(1) Mary’s psalm of praise reveals a repeated use of the terminology and theology of the Old Testament. Virtually every commentator agrees that Mary’s praise is dripping with Old Testament allusions and references. In contrast to the “psalm” of Jonah in Jonah chapter 2, which we have recently considered, the psalm of Mary is a magnificent masterpiece. It not only employs the terminology of the psalms, but the theology. Mary dwells on the character of God, particularly His grace, which is bestowed on the humble and the oppressed. There is a also distinct parallel with the praise of Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter 2. The marginal references in our Bibles indicate the many other allusions and parallels. Some may question how a simple peasant-girl may have such a grasp of the Old Testament. Geldenhuys responds, In discussing this hymn of praise, some critics have asked whether Mary had her Old Testament open before her when she uttered the song. They forget that all pious Israelites from their childhood days knew by heart songs from the Old Testament and often sang them in the home circle and at celebrations. Mary was steeped in the poetical literature of her nation, and accordingly her hymn also bears the unmistakable signs of it.

(2) Mary’s praise begins with her grateful response to the grace God has shown to her, a humble servant of the Lord. In verses 46-49, Mary praises God for His mercy as expressed toward her. She rejoices in God, who is her Savior (v. 47). While this may not refer only to the saving work which Messiah will come to accomplish, surely it includes it. God looked upon her humble estate with compassion; consequently she will be esteemed blessed by all future generations (v. 48). God’s compassion on her has revealed both His power and His holiness (“Mighty One,” “holy is His name,” v. 49). Mary does not in any way view herself as better or holier than anyone else. She views herself as a sinner who needs God’s salvation, and as a the Lord’s servant, whose humble estate is the occasion for His mercy and grace. There is no hint that she thinks God has chosen her to be the mother of Messiah due to her blessedness, but rather that her blessedness is the result of God’s sovereign and gracious choice to use her as His instrument. In verse 48 her blessedness is viewed as the result of God’s grace.

(3) In verse 50 Mary’s praise broadens, viewing God’s grace to her as a reflection of His gracious purposes for His chosen people, Israel. God has not just singled Mary out for blessing, leaving others in their miserable estate. Mary saw her blessing as but an illustration, one instance of God’s grace, which leads her to praise God for His grace to all those who fear Him, from one generation to generation. Mary thus presses from the specific to the general, from her personal benefits to the blessings which all of God’s people (those who “fear Him”) experience.

(4) In verses 51-55, Mary’s praise focuses on the faithfulness of God to His promises and His purposes, especially His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. If verse 50 spells out the principle that God blesses His people, from generation to generation, verses 51-55 give some specific ways in which this has and will be done. We can see that the verbs in these verses are past perfect. The question which this raises is what is meant by the use of the a past tense. My opinion is that deliverances which are described have already been demonstrated in Israel’s history, to some degree, but that they will finally and fully be realized in the future, as a result of Messiah’s coming. Much, perhaps most, of these things will be fulfilled in the second coming of Messiah, rather than in His first coming. In His first coming, Messiah came to reveal God to men, and to accomplish eternal redemption for all who would believe. In His second coming, Messiah will come to “set things straight,” to bring justice to the earth and judgment to the wicked. The book of Revelation speaks much of these themes, and prophesies their fulfillment.
(5) Mary’s praise serves as an encouragement to Elizabeth, just as Elizabeth’s praise was an encouragement to her. Many have observed the similarities of this Magnificat of Mary to the hymn of praise of Hanna in 1 Samuel chapter 2. It is so strong that some are tempted to view Elizabeth as the composer of the Magnificat, and not Mary. I believe that the similarity of the Magnificat to Hanna’s praise has the effect of encouraging Elizabeth, whose personal praise focuses on Mary, and not on her own joy in having a son in her old age. Thus there is a kind of criss-crossing effect in the praise of both women, for each expresses one’s personal praise, but edifies the other.

(6) Mary’s praise does not focus on the child she will bear, but on Father who is sending His Messiah. Geldenhuys has remarked, It strikes us that Mary in this hymn does not utter a direct word in connection with the Son promised to her. Nevertheless she assumes throughout that He has indeed been promised her. Her whole hymn is inspired by this fact. It seems to me that this is a very significant fact. We would expect Mary to be taken with the fact that she will have a baby, and that this baby will be the Son of God. While this is certainly true, Mary chose to focus on what the child would be and accomplish as an adult, and not what her child would be as a child. In other words, Mary’s praise does not focus on the immediate blessedness of her having this child, but on the ultimate outcome of the coming of Messiah. She looks at the long range, not the short term. She views this event in terms of the distant past, in terms of the covenant promises of God, in terms of the history of Israel, where God’s mercy was shown on generation after generation, and in terms of the distant future, when at His second coming Messiah will set things straight. At this time the social order will under a radical and violent reversal. The lofty will be put down and the humble will be exalted (vv. 51-52). The hungry will be fed and the well-fed will be hungry. The poor will be helped, but the rich will be sent away (v. 53).

(7) Mary focused more on the results of Christ’s second coming than she did the first. When you ponder the specific results of Messiah’s incarnation as outlined in Mary’s “Magnificat” they have to do with what we know of as Christ’s second coming, more than with His first coming. I doubt that Mary way aware of the fact that Christ would come to earth twice, to achieve two distinct purposes. To press the matter further, I doubt that Mary understood that the redemptive purpose of Christ’s first coming would be accomplished by His death on a cross, death at the hands of wicked men. Even this is a manifestation of God’s grace, for at this early point in time such knowledge would only have caused Mary unnecessary and premature pain. Simeon’s words in chapter 2 (v. 35) allude to this pain, but do not explain what its cause will be. How gracious God is in what He does not tell us, as well in what He does.

(8) Mary’s theology, as reflected in her “Magnificat” is vastly superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees, who would become the arch enemies of our Lord. As I have studied Mary’s psalm of praise it occurred to me that her theology was like that of her Son, and likewise, that it was very different from that of the scribes and Pharisees. I will not pursue this in any detail here, but let me point out several areas of contrast between Mary’s theology, her understanding of the Old Testament, and that of the scribes and Pharisees. Mary did not mention the Law of Moses, the Mosaic Covenant, but only God’s promise to Abraham, the Abrahamic Covenant. Mary understood that Israel’s hope was rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant, not in the Mosaic. The scribes and Pharisees seemed as though they could only think and talk in terms of the Law of Moses. Mary viewed all of God’s dealings in the light of His grace; the religious leaders only thought in terms of human works.

Mary understood the great themes of the Old Testament, such as God’s mercy and compassion, God’s concern for the poor and the helpless. These were the themes of the Old Testament prophets. They were not, however, the themes of the scribes and Pharisees. In His rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus constantly referred to these great themes, and to the fact that legalistic Judaism violated them (cf. Matthew 23). Mary also understood the purposes of God as a plan which He had been carrying out throughout Israel’s history. She viewed history in the light of this plan. The scribes and Pharisees, however, seemed only to grasp a few of the particulars, but missed the plan. They “strained the gnats” but they swallowed the camels. Mary grasped the “camels” and the religious leaders only grasped at the “gnats.”

From URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/worship-two-women-luke-139-56
Conclusion from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many Christians would list Christmas carols among their favorite songs of worship. It's not hard to imagine Mary's song as being the first Christmas carol. In the history of the church, Mary's song has become a staple of Christian expression in worship. Often known by its first word in the Latin translation, "Magnificat," it has been set to many beautiful melodies. Clearly, Christians through the centuries have recognized that Mary's expression of praise for God's faithfulness is something that all his people should express continually. In this light, Mary's song reflects many of the themes of other favorite carols: a sense of expectancy, the fact that our longing is about to be fulfilled, that something to be celebrated is taking place. Above all, Mary's song affirms what the Christmas story compels us to affirm today: that God is faithful to those promises, and that he fulfills them by sending Christ. God's faithfulness prompts us to see our situation differently. If we are comfortable, God's faithfulness prompts us to see ourselves as weak and needy. If we are downtrodden, God's faithfulness prompts us to have hope. God will do no less than fulfill his word for each of his faithful—us.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. The believer should rejoice in the Lord (Luke 1:46-48; Phil. 4:4)
2. God's power, holiness, and mercy should cause us to give Him praise (Luke 1:49-50)
3. God should be praised for humbling the proud (vs. 51)
4. God exalts those who are weak (vs. 52)
5. Praise be to God for supplying the needs of His people (vs. 53)
6. Riches can steal one's love for God.

Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator (From 12/25/2011)

After the angel told Mary she would give birth to the Messiah (Luke 1:26-35), Mary went to see her relative Elisabeth, who was herself miraculously pregnant in her old age. Elisabeth's Spirit-filled revelation upon seeing Mary confirmed the angel's words (verses 40-45) and brought forth Mary's beautiful song of praise to God.

Mary's praise (Luke 1:46-47)

In verses 46 and 47, the words "soul" and "spirit" are essentially the same. They speak of the inner self. Likewise, "Lord" and "God" are parallel terms. Mary was exalting, or lifting up, the Lord with her whole being. It is significant that Mary referred to God as her Saviour. This implies a recognition of her own sinfulness. This awareness of her sin and of God's salvation was not something she just now realized, however. She had known it all along and considered God her Saviour. The One she now carried in her womb would play a crucial role in God's work of salvation (cf. Matt. 1:21). Thus, she praised the Lord for what Christ's birth meant.

Reasons for Mary's praise (Luke 1:48-55)

"For" introduces further reasons for Mary's praise. The coming birth of her son demonstrated God's mercy and compassion. Though she was of humble social status, or "low estate," God had been merciful to Mary personally. He had exalted her by making her the mother of the Messiah. As a result, Mary would be forever counted as blessed. While we should not unduly exalt Mary, we should recognize the special place she had in God's plan and honor her for her faith. Mary declared, "Holy is his name" (Luke 1:49). "Holy" describes God's moral perfection. God is morally perfect in His character and thus also in His righteous and merciful acts. She recognized that God's mercy extended to all who "fear him from generation to generation" (vs. 50). Thus, Christ's coming is an act of mercy to us as well. Next, Mary praised God for His power and justice. While the verbs are past tenses, it seems they describe the future work of Christ and are set in past tense to express certainty. "Strength with his arm" (Luke 1:51) speaks of God's power, by which He humbles the mighty. The "proud," "the mighty" (vs. 52), and the "rich" (vs. 53) are all used as titles for those who reject God. Christ's coming assures us that the proud will be scattered, the mighty will be put down, and the rich will be sent away.
empty. On the other hand, God exalts the humble and fills the hungry. We see God's justice powerfully revealed in only a limited way now, but Christ's coming means that ultimately justice will prevail completely (John 5:21-29). Mary also praised God for His faithfulness to Israel. God remembered, or acted upon, His mercy to Israel by bringing their Messiah into the world. God had promised Abraham that through his descendants, blessing would come to all the world (Gen. 12:3). That blessing came in the Person of Christ. Christ's coming has perfectly revealed to us, as it did to Mary, God's mercy, power, justice, and faithfulness. God has not changed. He is the same God that Christ so perfectly revealed.