

A Christmas Canticle

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Like most of us equate Christmas and music together, so what do you think for a moment? Do you have a favorite Christmas him or song? Anybody favorite Christmas him or song? what marriage is, you know, I like Hark the herald angels. I'll sing you know, I'm not gonna think anyone else favorite Christmas song or him personally Well, alright, so if you like music and you like Christmas, you should be very interested in Luke's Gospel, because within the first two chapters, he fills it with four sometimes called Advent songs, or Christmas canticles. Now the word canticle simply means that A hymn of praise has a scriptural text that often then is incorporated into a worship service. And so you probably know the four songs I'm referring to often they have Latin titles given to them. There's the Benedictus, the song of Zachariah at the news and birth of john the baptist. There's the song of the angels as they announced Christ's birth the heavenly host, the glory in excelsis. Then there's also the song of Simeon called non Benedictus, and then the song of Mary, taken from that first word when she says my soul glorifies or magnifies the Lord. The Magnificat. So it's the Magnificat it says song of Mary in particular, that we want to look at this morning with the thought of Advent being a call for praise and for worship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So open your Bibles to Luke chapter one. And my goal this morning would be that not only will we discover that this song of Mary this Christmas canticle is not only unique to Mary, and you could argue as well to Elizabeth who joins in the celebration. Not only is it unique to them, but I hope to demonstrate and prove that this should be our song to that we have a right to sing this song, the same amount of celebration and excitement. So nervous as you turn to Luke chapter one. The song itself

begins in verse 46. But we're going to back up to verses 39 through 45. And what we're going to do is look at three parts of this particular song. The first part has personal praise, unique to Mary, and unique to Elizabeth. But then the second part gives us the object of praise, what is the source of which we're praising? And then finally comes around the very end to corporate praise. So let's start off with looking at simply personal praise. And so you notice in verse 39. At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. I don't know how you are on a Monday morning as you're getting ready for work. But I'm assuming that sometimes you might be running a little behind schedule. And so your little hectic, you're racing around the house trying to get out the door. Well, Luke's way of saying that Mary got ready and hurried is his way of conveying to us. She got up quickly and took off to get to Elizabeth, that she had received news not only was she going to carry the Messiah, but her relative was six months pregnant, and she's expecting and this is one of Luke's favorite phrases this thought of got ready and hurried. He uses a word more often just simply says a rose, which means to move quickly. Why does Mary move so quickly? Well, I think it reflects her excitement, not just that this older relative is expecting, which is a miracle in itself, but that this is all the promises of God coming into play to be fulfilled, that his plan of salvation, she and Elizabeth are going to play a part in God's work in that but you notice as well as you think it goes on and mentions here that she got up and right away. This is a three to four day trip. For Mary. This is not just going around the corner, three, four days, but 80 miles to travel to Judea. But then, as Luke tells his account, we move from just a quick glimpse of Mary's reaction to Elizabeth's praise. And so if you look at verse 41, through 45, you have here Elizabeth excitement when Mary shows up. Again, think of not just the surprise here. This is before email, FaceTime, texting, very suddenly shows up. But you notice what Elizabeth does, verse 41, as well as verse 44. She repeats twice, the baby leaped in my womb. That's a very interesting expression. And and you'll notice throughout this if you took the time to look at this song, there's a lot of Old Testament language in it. In other words, which would indicate that Mary knew her Old Testament because this phrase leap for joy is also found in the book of Genesis to talk about Jacob and Esau when they're in the womb. They're they're kind of tremendous movement and activity. So here you have a reference to something that is key in Israel's history in the past. Now just kind of thrown in there that even from Elizabeth she says, this child leaped in my womb, and she is filled with the Holy Spirit. Then notice in verse 42, it says in a loud voice, she exclaimed, blessed are you among women, and bless it is the child. You will bear. Now, probably for Christmas, many of you might be with family, friends, and I think you know how it goes, you get a bunch of people together. They're all sort of glad to see each other. voices can get pretty loud. I'm anticipating when my kids come, I'll be down in my office trying to study I will be able to hear loud voices, voices full of excitement. Well, this characterizes Elizabeth she is thrilled. Not just that the news and arrival of Mary, but but God's plan. Coming together, all these different promises. Notice that what she also says, Blessed are you among women bless it

is the child you will bear. But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? In other words, we often think of the first outright confession of Christ as Lord was Peters. But is it possible that actually Elizabeth confession here is the first outright confession knows what she says? How is it possible that the mother of not the Lord, but my lord has come in other words, a recognition that She too needed a savior, one who would pay the cost for her sins. And then in verse 45, she repeats bless it is she who has believed what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished. twice in this song, at least Mary's initial reaction or Lexi's, me, Elizabeth reaction, you have the reference to bless it to be spoken. Well. But we'll come back to this in a moment because this can also be misunderstood. What does it mean that Mary is, bless it? She spoken well as well. Now we come back to Mary's offer praise. And that takes us to verses 46 through 48. Notice her song begins and says and Mary said, my soul glorifies the Lord. And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the Humble state of a servant from now on all generations will call me bless it. So notice the first part of this song expression of praise. And this does not necessarily mean that this song erupted at that moment. It may have been as Mary reflected on these things during the at least three months that she stayed with Elizabeth, until the birth of we can assume John the baptist. But notice that reference in her song, my soul, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. I don't know about you, but if you could go back in time, and look at some of the things you said as maybe a 14 15 16 year old, would probably some of its I'm pretty mature. would probably be pretty embarrassed if it was put up on the screen for everyone is see. Keep in mind that although we don't have A specific age given Mary is probably only maybe 13 to 15 years old. And you look at the wisdom that she says when she says my soul and my spirit, rejoicing God. Basically, when you say soul and spirit, you're not necessarily indicating two completely different areas. But when you're emphasizing all of me, all of my understanding all of my affections, shout out and glorify God. And then you look closely here, I mentioned that there's different titles that come right out of the Old Testament, which would have been Mary's Bible at that time. Because look closely at some of the titles that she references there in verse 46, and 47. She says in God, my Savior, my Lord, those are straight out of the Old Testament. That is one reason why we read that opening prayer of Hannah from First Samuel to Mary's pulling out of that prayer, these titles, as well as you have references that would also come out of the book of Habakkuk, another prophet in Israel's past, who during his lifetime, saw many things happening and question, Lord, how long is this going to go on? And it says, for Mary and Elizabeth, there's an answer here, how long the Savior's coming, that promise for centuries you're going to see fulfilled. Notice in verse 48, as she shares her praise, personal praise of experiences she's had in verse 48, she says he has been mindful of the humble state of a servant. The phrase word mindful means looked at attentively at, he's paid attention to not just the situation of the world, he is paid attention to, to my needs to I am. None of us want to feel as if we go through our week, and nobody notices anything about us. Mary says God has been mindful of my

humble state. And often that word humble when it comes out of the Old Testament points to times in life when maybe you have been oppressed or persecuted, or there's trials or difficulties. As much as Mary rejoices. Remember that this pregnancy this child she will carry as a result of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her is not trendy at this time in history. This is not popular to be an unwed Mother and she doesn't know how is all of this going to play out in her life. But she's confident if God has been mindful of me, he will also be with me throughout this step and his plan. And you have once again in that phrase language that comes out of other places in the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms, the book of Genesis, and First Samuel again. In other words, Mary's mind is, is seeped in a knowledge of God's word, which maybe would say to us if we have a problem finding opportunity to praise God. Maybe it's because of our lack of knowledge of his word, which would translate into a lack of knowledge of who he is. So this particular song begins with personal praise. And yet we want to make sense That this canticle is not about worshiping Mary. This is not a way of exalting her above the one to whom she is carrying. Because we see that the song quickly turns now what is the object of all praise? And it's clearly not Mary. And Mary doesn't think that Elizabeth does not think that as long as take a closer look at verses 49 through 53 at the object of praise, and that kind of makes up the body of this greater song of praise. God, as you look at verses 49 and 50, you'll notice that the song turns our attention to God's attributes. In other words, it turns us to reflect on what is God's character. And so as you look closely at verse 49, and we were singing about this, it says, For the Mighty One has done great things for me. And when you speak of God's character, you speak of his omnipotence. He's all powerful. And who would better understand that at this point in her life, to say God is all powerful? He can do what man cannot do. And how even in our own thoughts we should take language like this, that once again comes even out of the Book of Exodus. When God delivered his people out of Egypt, he was reminding them, I am a mighty God. You can't do this, but but I can. And I can't help but think that Mary is rehearsing a lot of this as she finds herself offering this song of praise, but making sure it's directed to none other than the mighty God. Notice it goes on and says in verse 49, not only is he the Mighty One, but his attribute of holiness. holiness is an attribute that often summarizes all the God is he's holy, he set apart. He's above all of creation. And so the object of our praise is focused here on his attributes, His Holiness, the fact that he is the Mighty One. But there's one other attribute in verse 50. She says, His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. We've got on this subject of His mercy the other month, we're talking at the pbf time we were talking about how the church is a family. And that concept grows out of the Old Testament word said, for mercy. God's coming faithfulness and loyalty. very new, she was not perfect. She was not selected because she was perfect. God's grace and favor was on her. And therefore she does display righteousness and holiness. But she was not picked because she was perfect or she had done something to acquire this honor. So as you look at this, she says it that he's a God of mercy, that throughout generations, those who fear him those who

respond to him in worship and reverence, he will never abandon. He will never not fulfill His promises, to those whom he is called, to those whom he has loved. Me and often in our praise of God, we seem to focus more on the second back that Mary brings into the year. And that is the actions of God. Now the actions of God grow out of his attributes, but maybe we would do well, to not just focus on what actions God has done in our life. But the backup beyond that to look at his attributes. But you'll see in verses 51 through 53, Mary song, moving from attributes now says what are the actions of God that are worthy of praise that are the object of praise. And once again, you see in this like you should see in every worship service, the speaker, those who lead in music should fade into the background here. That is Mary speaks, you must want to picture her kind of like fading into the background and all you see. And here in this canticle is how great God is His attributes, but now he's actually And so if you look at verses 51 through 53, there's there's six verbs that are thrown in there to display God's actions, almost as if you're doing it rapidly because you could take all day going over his actions. But notice in verse 51, first verb he has performed mighty deeds with his arm, reference to his his power, his authority. So he's performed mighty deeds, he has scattered those who are proud in their innermost thoughts. Luke does something very interesting in his gospel, that when he speaks of Herod, he will refer to him as King Herod in the first two chapters, but after Jesus is born, Luke never again refers to King Herod he simply first to hurt. In other words, I think it's a subtle way of saying you know what, Harry? may have the position but he doesn't have the title. Because there's only one king is not Herod. Because he is the Mighty One. He is the one who, as it says here in verse 51, he scatters those who oppose him who are proud and arrogant. But then you notice in verse 52, he has brought down rulers from their thrones. But as lifted up the humble is not when Mary started to say I am just a humble servant of the Lord, is not what Elizabeth says, I am a humble servant of yours. Those are the ones that God lifts up and uses. But those who feel they do not need God are the ones who will be scattered and brought down and then finally in verse 53, He has filled the hungry with good things. But ascent the rich way empty. This will be very similar when Jesus and Matthew five through seven is giving the Beatitudes, these qualities characteristics of life in the kingdom. And a basic it says Blessed are those who are hungry. Now not physically hungry, but those who have a hunger and desire for him. Because they will be the ones that will be filled. Not those who feel they can satisfy themselves with everything but God through the frames frame of mind to put this hymn of praise in the has personal elements that relate to the very unique experiences of Mary and Elizabeth, but then move and open up to the object of all praise. But sadly, when we often look at this magnificent as well as any other songs in Luke's Gospel, we often fail to see see the connection that there are songs to in Christ. Because notice how Mary concludes her song. In verse 54 and 55. She comes back to corporate praise. Now, this isn't just about my personal experiences. It's not just about Israel's history. But it comes back to everybody. And verse 54, he has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to

Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers, it turns back now to corporate praise, we can all join in this song. If Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, because notice first 54 she proclaims in a corporate sense God's faithful Yes, to all of us. He has helped literally he has grasped. He has held on to you maybe even at times when you were trying to push him away. He has grasped you and help his servant israa. The word servant there is not the word necessarily for slave, but it's a more affectionate term child, that you are like a child. And God's protective love and care and concern for you in Christ should give you a part in this hymn of praise. But then notice in verse 55, this points us to the New Covenant established in Christ, because she mentions this is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and his decision. sentence forever. So I want you to do me a favor. Look closely at verse 55. If you need to like pick it up, bring it right up to your face. Can you see your name there? You should be able to. Because doesn't Paul tell us that we're children of Abraham in Christ, that we are Abraham's seed, through the covenant of faith made with Abraham, fulfilled and completed, now in Christ. So I saw that the Apostle Peter will say, and us titles given to Israel, and now ascribe them to us as believers that we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar a unique people, to God, to declare his praises and other words, this is a unique song It does magnify, and glorify God. And it is unique to Mary, and is unique to Elizabeth, in parts. But it's also not just their song. It's our song in Christ. And so therefore Advent is all about a call to praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So I hope in the midst of listening to some of your favorite Christmas songs or hymns this week, that maybe this one will be added to your list. Let's pray. Most Gracious God, thank you for these words in Scripture written down so that we can not just read them once that we can go over and over them again. Because many times in life, we don't feel like celebrating. We feel hopeless. We are struggling. May this song not just be something we read and say that's Mary song, but we'd be able to read it and say it's our song as well. We ask this in Jesus name, amen