

The Magnificat

CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO LUKE #2 - Pastor Gary Combs - December 14, 2025 - Luke 1:39-56

INTRO: Good morning church! Today, we're continuing our 4-week sermon series called CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO LUKE.

VISION: But before we begin, allow me to talk about how important this Christmas season is to our goal of saturating our city with the gospel. You see, this season is the most likely time of the year for our lost friends and family to accept an invitation to attend church with us. That's why I'm asking you to do three important things:

1. **Take those "Christmas At Eastgate" invite cards** and give them to the people you're praying for and invite them to church on December 21st. I promise we will offer a clear presentation of the gospel we can that day.
2. **Sign-up to fill one of our volunteer roles on December 21st.** We're expecting over 600 attenders that day and we won't every member helping to serve them, so they can clearly hear and respond to the gospel.
3. **Prepare to give your most generous special offering on December 21st** for our annual Christmas Missions Offering. This offering goes to support our international missions partners. This year, among other things, we hope to help the Castros purchase a vehicle for their church planting work in Mexico.



Now, let's turn our attention to today's message. Did you know that Mary composed and sang the very first Christmas carol? She did. Long before "Joy to the World" or "Silent Night." Mary gave us our first Christmas carol, and it's title is the title of today's sermon: **"THE MAGNIFICAT."**

The title comes from the Latin vulgate translation of the Bible in 382 AD, of Luke 1:46, which is translated: Magnificat ánima mea Dóminum — "My soul magnifies the Lord."

What does it mean to magnify the Lord? It means to enlarge, to esteem highly, to declare great!"

Need: Does the message of Christmas, of Christ's coming, cause you to make much of the Lord? To esteem Him highly? To call Him great! Or do you struggle during the Christmas season? You're tired of all the "Jingle Bells" and Santa songs on the radio? You're overwhelmed by the crazy busyness and expense of the gift buying and present wrapping, home decorating...and it's giving you a "Bah! Humbug!" attitude this Christmas? Or maybe it's that present you won't be buying, the stocking you won't be hanging, the empty seat at the table that won't be setting... that's got you feeling a lack of joy this Christmas?

Trans: But what if we're focusing on the wrong things at Christmas? What if there's a more faithful way to respond to the true and good news of Christmas?

BODY: In the gospel according to Luke, he recorded that when Mary visited her relative Elizabeth, she was immediately filled with the Holy Spirit, and her unborn baby leaped for joy in her womb, leading both women to faithfully respond to the Good News of the coming Messiah. We can faithfully respond to the Good News of Christ's Coming. How can we faithfully respond to the Good News of Christ's Coming? The text gives **three ways** we can faithfully respond to the Good News of Christ's Coming:

Read text: Luke 1:39-56 (ESV) 39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." 46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on 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 for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 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 offspring forever." 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

WE CAN FAITHFULLY RESPOND TO THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S COMING...

1. By responding with **Spirit-filled joy.**

EXP: (39-44) Notice the phrase "leaped for joy" (44). Even the unborn John the Baptist responded with Spirit-filled joy! Mary's "haste" (39) and Elizabeth's "loud cry" (42) are further evidence of great joy. Our first faithful response is vibrant, Spirit-filled joy!

"In those days" (39) - Mary went to see Elizabeth immediately after the news from Gabriel

"With haste" (39) (σπουδή, *spoudē*) - with haste, earnestness, diligence. Mary was on a mission.

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"Hill country ... Judah" (39) - generally identified as the village of Ein Karem, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem. From Nazareth, it is approximately 90-100 miles (uphill nearly 1,336 feet in elevation) and estimated at a 4-5 day walk. The Church of the Visitation sits on the supposed site today.



"House of Zechariah" (40) (Ζαχαρίας, *Zacharias*) - meaning "remembered of Jehovah." A Levite priest of the division of Abijah; the eighth priestly order of the 24 groups who serve in the temple (1 Chronicles 24). Father of John the Baptist, but made mute for his unbelief of Gabriel's message of blessing him with a son.

"Elizabeth" (40) (Ἑλισάβετ, *elisabet*) - meaning "oath of God." Elizabeth was "of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1:5), Mary's mother may have been from a Levite family and married a man from Judah; making Elizabeth Mary's aunt. Elizabeth may have been Mary's aunt, great-aunt, or older cousin.

"Baby leaped in her womb" (41) (σκιρτάω, *skirtaō*) - to skip, jump, or leap for joy

"Filled with the Holy Spirit" (41) (πίμπλημι, *pimplēmi*) - to fill, imbue, or furnish. At the sight of Mary, Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit of God. "Filled with extraordinary gifts, with a spirit of prophecy; by which she knew that the Messiah was conceived." (*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*)

"She exclaimed ... loud cry" (42) (ἀναφωνέω, *anaphōneō*) - to cry out with a loud voice, call aloud, exclaim. (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) With a megaphone. The verse double dips in telling us it was a loud voice.

"Blessed are you" (42) (εὐλογέω, *eulogeō*) - to praise, celebrate with praises; to invoke blessings

"Why is this granted to me" (43) (πόθεν, *pothen*) - how is that, how can that be?

"Mother of my Lord" (43) (κύριος, *kurios*) - "Elisabeth in these words acknowledged ... Christ her Lord, and Mary to be his mother." (*Matthew Poole's Commentary*)

ARG: Rather than focusing on holiday foods and gifts, let Christmas open you up to joy in the Spirit!

Romans 14:17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

ILL: Have you seen these videos on social media where a returning soldier surprises his wife and kids? At first there's a look of confusion and surprise, followed by them shouting and crying and leaping into his arms. The joy is spontaneous, uncontrollable, nobody has to teach them how to respond that way.

That's Mary. That's Elizabeth. That's even unborn John. When the presence of Christ comes near, joy rises up like a reflex—not forced, not manufactured, but Spirit-provoked. And this is what Christmas is meant to awaken in us—not the thin, commercial cheer that depends on circumstances, but the deep, soul-shaking joy that erupts when the Spirit of Christ is near.

APP: What about you? What happens in your soul when Jesus draws near? This Christmas, don't let the noise, stress, or grief drown out the joy that only the Holy Spirit can give. Joy rises not from the season but from the Savior. Begin your mornings by inviting the Spirit to fill you afresh. Turn your attention away from the presents under the tree and put it on the presence of Jesus. Let Him rekindle joy in you. If the unborn John could leap, surely we can. Let the Spirit fill you with the same kind of joy that filled that house in Judea.

2. By responding with Servant-like submission. (WE CAN FAITHFULLY RESPOND TO THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S COMING...)

EXP: (45-49) Look at v.45. "Blessed is she who believed." Elizabeth contrasts Mary's faith with the unbelief of Zechariah. Mary gives God glory: "My soul magnifies the Lord" (46), and confesses the Lord as her "Savior" (47) and herself as His "servant" (48). Her song is an act of servant-like submission to the mighty God. Remember how Mary submitted faithfully like a servant to the word of the Lord from the angel Gabriel:

Luke 1:38 (ESV) And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

"Believed" (45) (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) - to think to be true, to be persuaded of; to believe, commit, to trust.

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"Magnifies" (46) (μεγαλύνω, *megalunō*) - to declare great; to esteem highly, to extol, laud, celebrate.

"God my Savior" (47) (σωτήρ, *sōtēr*) - savior, deliverer. Mary declares God as "her" ("my") Savior.

"Humble estate of his servant" (48) (ταπεινωσις, *tapeinōsis*) - lowness, low estate, humble condition. (δούλη, *doulē*) - handmaiden, female slave, servant. She saw Him high and herself low.

"Blessed" (45,48 - 2x in Greek; 4x in English including eulogeō - 42) (μακαρίζω, *makarizō*) - esteemed fortunate; blessed, happy.

"Mighty" (49) (δυνατός, *dynatos*) - able, powerful, mighty, strong; excelling in power.

"Holy is his name" (49) (ἅγιος, *hagios*) - sacred (pure, morally blameless); consecrated, set apart.

ARG: True submission answers the blunt question Jesus posed in...

Luke 6:46 (ESV) "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

ILL: A sailboat can be well-crafted, beautifully painted, and sitting on sparkling water, but if the sail isn't raised, it won't go anywhere. The wind can blow, but the boat will sit dead in the water. But once that sail is lifted—once it's surrendered to the direction and strength of the wind—the boat moves.

Mary positioned her life to "catch the wind" of God's will. She didn't resist. She didn't argue. She didn't try to chart her own course. She lifted her "Yes, Lord," and the Spirit carried her into God's purposes. Submission didn't weaken her—it empowered her. It freed her to live and move according to God's power.

APP: Where do you need to "lift your sail" to God this Christmas? Is there an area where you've been resisting Him—clinging to control, holding back obedience, or delaying a step of faith? Follow Mary's example, say "I am the Lord's servant, let it be to me according to your word." Let this season be one of servant-like submission. Because when you submit to God's will, you make room for Him to move in your life.

3. By responding with Scripture-based praise. (WE CAN FAITHFULLY RESPOND TO THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S COMING...)

EXP: (50-56) Mary's song is soaked in Scripture. Nearly every line echoes the OT, especially Hannah's song in 1 Sam. 2:1-10. Remember Hannah was a young barren woman whom God opened her womb and gave a son named Samuel. Her song was in the form of a prayer. Here's how it began:

1 Samuel 2:1 (ESV) And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the Lord"

Compare it to Mary's song:

Luke 1:46 (ESV) And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord"

Like Hannah, Mary's praise isn't free-floating emotion; it's grounded in God's character and God's Word.

"His mercy" (50) (ἔλεος, *eleos*) - mercy: kindness, goodwill towards the afflicted, with a desire to help.

"Fear him" (50) (φοβέω, *phobeō*) - to fear, be afraid; to treat with deference or reverential obedience.

"Scattered the proud" (51) (ὑπερήφανος, *hyperēphanos*) - appearing above others; haughty, proud.

"Brought down the mighty" (52) (καθαίρω, *kathaireō*) - with the use of force: to throw down, cast down

"Filled the hungry" (53) (πείνάω, *peinaō*) - to hunger, be hungry; to suffer want; to be needy

"Helped his servant Israel" (54) (ἀντιλαμβάνω, *antilambanō*) - to lay hold of, help, partaker, support. This whole section seems greatly informed by the words of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:10:

1 Samuel 2:10 (ESV) ... he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

"Abraham...offspring" (55) (σπέρμα, *sperma*) - Mary is very aware of God's covenant to Abraham and the promised seed. The apostle Paul picks up on this idea:

Galatians 3:16 (NKJV) Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

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“Mary remained with her about three months” (56) - 6 + 3 is 9 months. This would put Mary being present for Elizabeth to go full term and deliver her son. It is likely Mary stuck around to see the birth.

ARG: The Word of Christ is to inspire our teaching and worship.

Colossians 3:16 (ESV) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

ILL: Have you ever heard a musician improvise? It seems spontaneous—but it’s not random. It flows from thousands of hours of learning scales, chords, and musical patterns. The freedom of improvisation rests on the foundation of memorization and practice.

Mary’s praise is like that. It flows freely from her heart, but only because her heart was filled with Scripture. Like many little Jewish girls, she had probably memorized Hannah’s prayer. So when God moved, Scripture spilled out of her in song.

You cannot sing what you do not know. And you will not praise what you have not recognized and put in your heart. Mary’s Magnificat shows us that true praise rises from a mind and soul saturated in God’s Word.

APP: How will Scripture shape your worship this Christmas? Instead of letting your feelings dictate your praise, let the Word impact your feelings. Open your Bible each day in December. Read a portion of Luke. Pray through the Psalms. Let God’s promises become the vocabulary of your worship.

And when you gather with family, when you sing carols, when you sit quietly before the Lord—let His Word rise from your heart like it did from Mary’s.

Praise rooted in Scripture will steady your soul, strengthen your faith, and fix your eyes on the God who keeps His promises forever.

CONCLUSION: The Scripture concludes with this simple line: “And Mary... returned to her home” (56). After all the excitement, after the miracle of Elizabeth’s greeting, after the outburst of Spirit-filled joy and the soaring poetry of the Magnificat, perhaps even after witnessing the birth of John the Baptist and the miraculous return of Zechariah’s voice... Mary returned home.

It’s striking, isn’t it? Hannah did the same. After pouring out her heart before the Lord, after worshiping at Shiloh, after surrendering her son Samuel to the Lord... she and her husband “went home” (1 Sam. 2:11).

Because eventually, all of us must return home. Eventually, the time for Christmas parties and gift giving ends, we put away all the decorations and go back to our ordinary rooms, ordinary routines, and ordinary responsibilities.

But what did Mary carry home? She had a long journey back. But she carried with her: Joy in the Holy Spirit, submission to the Lord’s will, and praise shaped by the Word of God.

And so can we. This Christmas, when you return home, when you get in your car after church, when you step back into your living room, when you go back to work on Monday morning—take faithfully these with you:

- 1) Respond with Spirit-filled joy. Let Christ’s presence stir joy in you again.
- 2) Respond with servant-like submission. Lift your sail to God and say, “Here I am, Lord.”
- 3) Respond with Scripture-based praise. Let God’s Word become the song of your soul.

Mary returned home changed. May we return home the same way: filled with the Spirit, surrendered to God, and singing His praise in everything we do.

Let’s pray.