

May 11, 2003 by Steve Brandon



Mary's Psalm

Luke 1:46-55

1. A Woman of Faith (verses 26-45)
2. A Woman of Praise (verses 46-47)
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In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Since that day, Americans have been honoring our mothers. For some of us, this means having lunch with our mothers, as I will do today. For some of us, this means writing a note to our mothers. For some of us, this means calling our mothers. For some of us, this means simply remembering our mothers, who have passed away. As a church it is our opportunity to honor the mothers by thanking them for their labors and encouraging them to continue in their toiling labor. Someone once warned mothers, "Unless you deliberately set aside a little time for regular relaxation, you will not be able to efficiently care for your family. Therefore, plan to relax for a minimum of an hour and a half every fifteen years."

This morning, I would like to focus our attention on the words written by one of the most special mothers in all of the Bible. Her name is Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. These words are found in Luke 1:46-55. Down through the ages, these words have blessed many mothers and have become famous among the words of the Scripture. These verses even have their own name, like other portions of Scripture. The "Ten Commandments" is the name given to Exodus 20:1-17. The "Shema" is the name given to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which begins, "Hear O Israel." The "Beatitudes" is the name of the first portion of the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. 5:3-12). The "Lord's Prayer" is the prayer that our Lord taught us in Matt. 6:9-13. The "Olivet Discourse" is the name given to the discussion Jesus had with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, shortly before His death (as recorded in Matthew 24-25). The "Upper Room Discourse" is the name given to John 13-17, which is the discussion that Jesus had with disciples during the time of the Passover. First Corinthians 13 is known as "The Love Chapter." These verses are called, "The Magnificat," which comes from the Latin of verse 46, which reads, "Magnificat animum mea Dominum."

These words are in some ways like a Psalm: they are filled with praise, filled with good theology, and expressive of the cry of a dependent heart. I would contend that if these words were found in the collection of the Psalms, we wouldn't think twice about them being there. As such, I have simply entitled my message this morning, "Mary's Psalm."

Luke 1:46-55

46 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord,
47 "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.
49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.
50 "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.
51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.
52 "He has brought down rulers from [their] thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.
53 "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; AND SENT AWAY THE RICH EMPTY-HANDED.
54 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his offspring forever."

These are great words that come from the heart of a great woman! They give praise to God. They express a heart of humility before the Lord. They are saturated with the truth of God's mercy to those who fear God, to those who are humble before God, and to those of His chosen nation, Israel.

As we dissect these words, I want to focus our attention upon five characteristics of Mary. First, she was ...

1. A Woman of Faith (verses 26-45)

When we read these words of the Magnificat, how easy is it for us to think, "Oh, that was Mary. God had chosen her to be special. She had everything going for her. It was easy for her to believe. It was easy for her to utter such a Psalm. After all, she had an angel come and visit her!" It is true that an angel appeared to her and pronounced a blessing on her. This occurred in **Luke 1:26-28**, "Now in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, 'Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.'"

You must realize, however, that an angelic visit doesn't mean instant faith (or instant ease in life). In **verse 29** we find out that "she was

greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be" (verse 29). It just isn't every day that an angel shows up at your doorstep. Far from being filled with faith, she was filled with perplexity, as is only to be expected. She didn't know that this angelic visitation meant. Rather, she was confused, perplexed and troubled at this statement. Furthermore, she was filled with fear. We know this because the angels said, "Do not be afraid, Mary." (verse 30). When angels appear, it is a fearful thing. When an angel appeared to Zacharias, we are told that "fear fell upon him" (Luke 1:12). When the angels appeared to the shepherd in the fields, we read that "they were terribly frightened" (Luke 2:9). Literally, "they feared a great fear." In each of these cases, the first thing out of the angel's mouth was, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 1:13; 2:10). They, like Mary were also afraid.

Continuing the story, we hear the angel's explanation of His visitation. "And the angel said to her, 'You have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God'" (**Luke 1:30-37**).

Now, if anything sounds fanciful, this does. Mary is not married. She has never known a man sexually. She was not a woman of privilege or noble birth. Rather, she was of humble circumstances, destined to be the wife of a carpenter, not a king or a powerful politician, who might be able to help her son rise to prominence. Yet, she is told that she will bear a Son, who will become king. Not just any king, but an eternal king of a kingdom without end. He will be the greatest king that ever lived, as his kingdom will continue forever (verse 33).

It has been said in jest that "every Jewish mother thinks that her first Son is God." But the angel wasn't joking when he told these things to Mary. He was in dead earnest. He said, "for nothing will be impossible with God" (verse 37).

It is right at this moment in time that Mary was confronted with these incredible predictions. She could either embrace them in faith. Or, she could reject them as fairy tale. She could believe in the words of the God of the impossible or not. Her response demonstrates her faith in the God of the impossible. **Verse 38** gives us Mary's words, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." She was a woman of tremendous faith, who entirely submitted herself to the plans of God. At this point, she certainly didn't understand all of the implications of this angelic message. But her heart was one of entire submission. She willingly presented herself as a bondservant of the Lord. In effect, she was saying, "My life is the Lord's. I willingly give it to Him. However He calls me to serve Him, I will follow as a willing slave to His will."

Mary's words were an expression of her tremendous faith before God. It paved the way for the difficulties that would come in her life. She would face the pain of false accusation from her husband to be, who was planning on putting her away secretly for her supposed unfaithfulness (Matt. 1:19). She would face the pain of false accusation from the society at large, who supposed that Jesus was born of fornication (John 8:41). As the mother of Jesus, her life would be filled with difficulty. Remember when she presented Jesus to Simeon in the temple? He said, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed -- and a sword will pierce even your own soul -- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35). Certainly this took place as Jesus was falsely accused and hated by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Certainly this took place as she watched her son die His painful death upon the cross for sins that He never committed (John 19:25). It must have felt like a dagger into her heart. But, she had resolved in faith, to place herself wholeheartedly in submission to His plans.

After receiving her angelic visitation, Mary heads for the hills, literally. She "went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah" (**verse 39**) to visit her relative, Elizabeth, who probably lived in or around Jerusalem, for her husband, Zacharias was a high priest in Jerusalem, where the temple was. Apparently, it took an angel to notify Mary that Elizabeth was already 6 months along in the process of having a son. She who was barren for all of these years was now to have a baby. This was exciting news. Somehow, however, the news didn't yet get to Mary. They didn't have telephones or email in those days.

I know what this is about. My own wife is 5 ½ months pregnant. Last Sunday evening, we ran into some old friends of ours we haven't seen for a while. They didn't know that Yvonne was pregnant, so we told them. (Yvonne is at the stage where she looks pregnant, but you don't want to assume that she is, lest she isn't and you insult her recent weight gain). When such news is communicated, there is shock, excitement, joy and a desire to know the details. Over the past few months, we have been asked, "When is it due? Do you know whether it is a boy or a girl? Is your mom coming out to help you? Where are you going to put the baby in your house?"

So, Mary went to visit her relative, Elizabeth. There must have been much joy and excitement in those three months that Mary and Elizabeth spent together. We don't know much about those days. We only know about the first few moments of their time together. We read that Mary, "entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And *blessed is she who believed* that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord'" (Luke **1:40-45**). Here in verse 45, we see Elizabeth commending Mary's faith (verse 45), "blessed is she who believed." Mary was a woman of faith.

Women, are you, like Mary, a woman of faith? You will never be told that you will have the Son of God in your womb. You will never be given the privileges (or responsibilities) that follow her scenario. But, you are called to faith, just as she was. She was called to believe God that she would bear the Christ. Likewise, you are called to believe God that Christ's atonement on the cross is sufficient to cover your sins. This is the good news of the gospel that you need to believe. You are called to believe the faithfulness and goodness of God. You may not have Jesus in your womb. But Paul prayed to the end that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17).

Are you a woman of faith? When your life encounters difficulty, does your faith in Christ stand or crumble? Mary's faith was great. In fact, it is

her faith that expressed itself in these great words of praise and adoration that come in the Magnificat. She was also ...

2. A Woman of Praise (verses 46-47)

The first two verses of this Psalm are simply expressions of adoration and exultation: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (verses 46-47). Let's break these verses down by looking at the subjects, the verbs and the objects:

The subjects

In verse 46, the subject is "my soul." In verse 47, the subject is "my spirit." I believe that you lose the point of Mary if you seek to discern the difference between these two words. "My soul" and "my spirit" simply depict the internal person. She is simply reflecting upon the intense, inward, all-encompassing sense of her worship before the Lord. Psalm 103:1 is a great parallel here, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and **all that is within me**, bless His holy name." Mary has been moved to the very depth of her being to exalt the LORD. This isn't a surface praise. She was "singing and making melody **with [her] heart** to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).

It is easy to praise God with your lips, without a heart that is worshiping the Lord. Churches today are filled with such people. The Pharisees did this. They honored the Lord with their lips, while their heart was far from God (Matt. 15:8). It is easy for us to do this. But Mary wasn't doing this. She was deeply worshiping the Lord with all of her being.

The verbs

In verse 46, the verb is "exalt." Your translation might have "magnify" or "glorify." It comes from the word, mega(mega), which means "great." The idea is simply that God would "make great," as the New American Standard Bible has in its footnote. When you go to the fast food place and order your super value meal, you can often "super-size" it for an extra dollar. Rather than a large coke, you get an extra-large coke. Rather than large fries, you get extra-large fries. This is the idea. Mary is saying here, "My soul 'super-sizes' the Lord." Obviously, it isn't in the sense that we actually make God bigger, but rather, that He becomes great and glorious in our sight and in the sight of others. I think that "magnify" is the translation that best gets at the sense of this word. You look through a magnifying glass to make things look bigger. This is what Mary is doing -- making God look bigger than she saw Him before.

In verse 47, the verb is "rejoice." I believe that your translations are all the same. I looked at about ten different translations that you might have on your lap and they were all the same. It is a strong word of rejoicing. It's not, "I rejoice" (with a frown on your face). It's "I REJOICE" (with upstretched hands). There is genuine joy in Mary's expression. There is genuine happiness in Mary's heart. Psalm 95:1 says, "Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD." This is what Mary was doing.

The objects:

The object in verse 46 is "the Lord." The object in verse 47 is "God my Savior." "The Lord" signifies His reigning and ruling power. "God my Savior" signifies His loving and compassionate kindness. "The Lord" speaks of His transcendence and authority. "God my Savior" speaks of Him imminence and care for us. "The Lord" is seated upon the throne. "God my Savior" has come to help me in my distress. In these things, she is just like us. She needed a Lord to guide her and guard her. She needed a Savior to forgive her and help her.

Contrary to the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, Mary did sin and did need a Savior to save her from her sin. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was not conceived in sin. "The Immaculate Conception" teaches that Mary was preserved from sin at her conception. In 1854, pope Pius IX issued a papal bull, which said, "We declare, pronounce and define that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, and that this doctrine was revealed by God, and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful" (The Tablet, December 12, 1953 as quoted by Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, p. 158). Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary never sinned.

Lest you think that this is outdated, listen to the words of Pope John Paul II from a message he delivered on December 8, 1998, "O Mary! From the very first moment of life, you were preserved from original sin, through the merits of Jesus, whose Mother you were to become. Sin and death have no power over you. From the moment you were conceived, you have enjoyed the unique privilege of being filled with the grace of your blessed Son, to be holy as he is holy. For this reason the heavenly messenger, sent to announce the divine plan to you, greeted you saying: 'Hail, full of grace' (Lk 1:28). Yes, O Mary, you are full of grace; you are the Immaculate Conception". (Found at <http://www.cin.org/jp2/jp981208.html>).

But, Mary rejoiced in God, her savior, because she needed a savior.

Mary was a woman of praise. Women, you are called to be women of praise as well. This isn't just Mary who should be like this. Praise is the natural response to God of all those who know God. "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so" (Ps. 107:1-2). The redeemed heart will joyfully sing His praise and long to see the Lord magnified! We are saved to worship Him.

And so, I ask you, does your heart bubble over in praise to God? Do you have a joyful countenance, that loves to ascribe honor to your King? Does praise come from the fruit of your joy in God for what He has done for you in Christ Jesus? Do you long to lift up His name at home and in the church? Or, do you complain? Or, are you grumpy? Or, are you unthankful. The Psalmist says, "Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright" (Ps. 33:1). Praise is the natural thing for redeemed souls to do.

Mary was ...

3. A Woman of Humility (verses 48a, 49)

Verse 48 reads, "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant." We don't know anything about Mary's character before the angel appeared to her, except what she reveals to us here. She regarded herself as a humble bondservant.

I believe that humility is the great, identifying mark of a Christian. The one who sees God for Whom He really is cannot but help to be humble before Him: never coming before the Lord with an attitude of arrogance; never coming before the Lord as if you deserve anything; never coming before the Lord proud of your accomplishments. Rather, Christians are to boast in the Lord (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Peter tells us that "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). God opposes the one who puffs himself up and thinks more highly of himself that he ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

Not only is Mary humble, but much of Mary's Psalm deals with how God has opposed the proud, but given grace to the humble. This theme of humility is a prominent theme in these words of Mary. This is what impressed Mary's heart the most, that God would chose to come into this world through her. She viewed herself as an undeserving bonds slave, for whom "the Mighty One has done great things" (verse 49).

Look at how often this theme surfaces in her words, ...

Verse 50 reads, "And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him." In other words, God's gracious acts of kindness come to those who rightly understand God to be powerful and themselves to be weak. You fear those who are greater than you are. God looks upon those who fear Him. He comes to them in His mercy. Mary would have been among the number of those who feared God. Mary was a recipient of God's mercy -- not because she deserved it, but because of the way that God acts: He is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

The same theme of humility comes **again in verse 51**, "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart." You have people here who think highly of themselves and God has scattered them. A few nights ago in our family Bible reading, we were reading about Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who came and attacked the cities of Judah (2 Kings 18-19).

His servant Rabshakeh stood and cried to the people of Judah, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. 'Thus says the king, "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die.' But do not listen to Hezekiah, when he misleads you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"' (2 Kings 18:28-35).

Sennacherib was proud in heart. Do you remember what happened to him? Hezekiah in his humility prayed to God for deliverance. The LORD spoke through Isaiah to tell Hezekiah, "Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you" (2 Kings 19:20). The angel of the LORD went through the camp of the Assyrians at night and killed 185,000 of the Assyrians. The army turned around and went home.

"He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart" (Luke 1:51).

The theme continues in verse 52, "He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble." I think of how Nebuchadnezzar was brought down from his throne. He proudly boasted, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). You remember what happened to him? He was brought down from his throne. Sovereignty was removed from him. He was made to dwell with the beasts. On the other hand, I think of Joseph, who was humbled greatly in prison. God exalted Him to vice-ruler in Egypt!

We get another wave of **the same thought in verse 53**, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed."

Regarding the hungry: the Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, and God provided manna for them (Exodus 16). Ruth and Naomi were hungry, and God satisfied them with the gleanings of Boaz' field (Ruth 2). Elijah was hungry and God instructed the ravens to bring him meat and bread. God filled the brook Cherith with water (1 Kings 17:1-7). God provided food for the widow of Zarephath with a bowl of flour that never emptied and a jar of oil that never needed filling (1 Kings 17:8-16).

Regarding the rich: Solomon, the richest man who ever lived, left this life in emptiness and despair (1 Kings 11). Solomon gave the following testimony: "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep" (Ecc. 5:10-12).

We have just scratched the surface of Biblical examples of the truth that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). Mary has repeated this example, again and again and again. (in verses 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53). Mary's humble heart flowed over to be a theme of this Psalm.

Even here in the context of the Christmas story, we have several examples of God looking highly upon the lowly. When Jesus was born, it was the shepherds that were told of His arrival, not the kings in high places (Luke 2:8-20). These shepherds were probably hired workers who were working the night-shift, taking care of their sheep. There was nothing special about these people. They were the migrant farm-workers of the culture. But God chose to announce the arrival of His Son through these shepherds. When our baby is born, we will send out a special announcement to those who are most important in our lives. God chose to send His announcement to these lowly shepherds. Remember, God looks upon the humble.

Later on in Luke 2, we see two other humble folks to whom God was delighted to display His kindness. The Holy Spirit had appeared to an old priest named Simeon and told him "that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). Indeed, this old priest was privileged with setting his eyes upon the Christ. He said, "Now Lord, let Your bond-servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:29-30).

In verses 36-38, we have the story of Anna – a widow who was 84. She "never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers." You can compare Anna to the old woman at church, who is always present with a smile on her face, as she watches to see how God will answer her many prayers. A humble and lowly servant of the Lord. The Lord was gracious to allow her to see the Christ as well. From the very moment she laid her eyes upon Jesus, she gave thanks to God, and never stopped speaking of Him to all who would come to the temple (Luke 2:38).

How many other people were in the temple that day when Mary and Joseph arrived to dedicate their first-born male (Luke 2:23)? You had the important religious leaders. You had business men. You had the rich. You had the handsome. You had the talented. You had the important people in the community. But who saw the Christ? This old, insignificant priest, who was relegated to the child-dedication sacrifice duty and an old, prayer warrior woman. God delights in exalting the humble. That's why He was gracious to these two humble servants. That's why He chose Mary to be the mother of His Son. Because, she was a woman of humility.

Women, you are also called to be women of humility. You are called to be humble before God and humble before others. Peter said that the "gentle and quiet spirit ... is precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:4). He is describing a dedicated spirit of humility. Those having such a spirit will not think more highly of themselves that they ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

The number of things a typical woman does that goes unnoticed are many (cleaning, diaper changing, dusting, preparing food, ...). I know that. If you are married, I trust that your husband knows that. The humble woman won't feel the need to point this out to everybody, but will continue her work, trusting in God to exalt her at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6).

I found a humorous little write-up to demonstrate how many duties and responsibilities mothers typically have.

POSITION: Mom

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Long term team player needed for challenging permanent work in an often chaotic environment. Candidate must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and 24 hour shifts on call. Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in faraway cities. Travel expenses not reimbursed. Extensive courier duties also required.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Must provide on-the-site training in basic life skills, such as nose blowing. Must have strong skills in negotiating conflict resolution and crisis management. Ability to suture flesh wounds a plus. Must be able to think out of the box but not lose track of the box, because you most likely will need it for a school project. Must reconcile petty cash disbursements and be proficient in managing budgets and resources fairly, unless you want to hear, "He got more than me!" for the rest of your life.

Also, must be able to drive motor vehicles safely under loud and adverse conditions while simultaneously practicing above mentioned skills in conflict resolution. Must be able to choose your battles and stick to your guns. Must be able to withstand criticism, such as "You don't know anything." Must be willing to be hated at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5 to go skating. Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly.

Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule and be able to go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard are not someone just crying wolf. Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers. Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks. Must be willing to be indispensable one minute, an embarrassment the next. Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys and battery operated devices.

Also, must have a highly energetic entrepreneurial spirit, because fund-raiser will be your middle name. Must have a diverse knowledge base, so as to answer questions such as "What makes the wind move?" or "Why can't they just go in and shoot Saddam Hussein?" on the fly. Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.

Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.

Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION:

Virtually none. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:

None required, unfortunately. On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

WAGES AND COMPENSATION:

You pay them, offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent. When you die, you give them whatever is left. The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and wish you could only do more.

BENEFITS:

While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered, job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life if you play your cards right. (Author unknown)

Are you a humble woman? Or, are you a proud woman? Do you make sure that everyone knows of your wonderful talents? Do you seek to let everyone know all of your wonderful things that you are doing? Or do you simply serve with humility. I remember many years ago being involved in a college group at church. We once played Balderdash with them, where you try to guess word meanings and fake everybody else by believing your definition. There was a married couple that was working to shepherd the group. The wife was pretty unassuming and often took a back-stage to things. Well, she destroyed everyone in the game, knowing a few of the definitions herself. She was greatly talented, but greatly humble.

Mary was ...

4. A Woman of Scripture (verses 50-55)

Think about what happened to Mary. This angel appears to her to tell that she will bear the Son of God in her womb (Luke 1:35). She quickly leaves to the hill country to visit Elizabeth. Within the first few minutes of their conversation, she says, "My soul exalts the Lord, and My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, ..." She strings together a masterful arrangement of Scripture upon Scripture upon Scripture. At times she quoted the scripture directly (as in verses 46, 50). At times she quoted the scripture loosely. She pulls together great themes of Scripture: humility, God's mercy, God's covenant faithfulness (verses 54-55).

Perhaps these words were entirely composed as she took the several day journey from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea. I'm sure as the thought about her situation, Hannah's came to mind. Hannah was humbled due to her barrenness, yet the LORD opened her womb. Hannah began her song with these words, "My heart exults in the LORD" (1 Sam. 2:1). It sounds much like the beginning of Mary's Psalm. I

In fact, much of Hannah's song is much the same as Mary's. A most predominant theme in Hannah's song is all about how the LORD crushes those who are proud and lofty. It is all about how the LORD lifts high the humble. Noticed the highlighted verses below...

1. Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.
- 2 "There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God.
- 3 "Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed.
- 4 "The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength.**
- 5 "Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to hunger. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.
- 6 "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.**
- 7 "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.**
- 8 "He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor;** For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, And He set the world on them.
- 9 "He keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail.**
- 10 "Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; And He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed."

There are many other parallels to Mary's words and the words of the Old Testament Scripture.

Hanna prayed, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me" (1 Sam. 1:11).

Mary said, "He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant" (Luke 1:48).

Leah said, "Women will call me happy" (Gen. 30:13).

Mary said, "from this time on all generations will count me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

Moses wrote, "He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things" (Deut. 10:21).
Mary said, "For the Mighty One has done great things for me" (Luke 1:49).

Psalms 111:9 reads, "Holy and awesome is His name."
Mary said, "And holy is His name" (Luke 1:49).

Psalms 103:17 says, "The lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him."
Mary said, "And His mercy is upon Generation after generation toward those who fear Him" (Luke 1:50).

Psalms 89:10 says, "You scattered your enemies with Your mighty arm."
Mary said, "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart" (Luke 1:51).

Job said, "He makes priests walk barefoot, and overthrows the secure ones" (Job 12:19).
Mary said, "He has brought down rulers from [their] thrones" (Luke 1:52).

Eliphaz said, "He sets on high those who are lowly" (Job 5:11).
Mary said, "He has exalted those who were humble" (Luke 1:52).

Psalms 107:9 says, "He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good."
Mary said, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty handed" (Luke 1:53).

Isaiah wrote, "Israel [is] My servant" (Is. 41:8).
Mary said, "He has given help to Israel His servant" (Luke 1:54).

Ps. 98:3 says, "He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel."
Mary said, "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy" (Luke 1:54).

Micah wrote, "You will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:20).
Mary said, "As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his offspring forever" (Luke 1:55).

David wrote, "He shows lovingkindness to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever" (2 Sam. 22:51).
Mary said, "To Abraham and his offspring forever" (Luke 1:55). (See The International Critical Commentary, Alfred Plummer's commentary on Luke, pp. 30-31).

Mary's Psalm is filled with Hebrew poetical parallelism as well. She knew of Hebrew parallelism. Her mind was saturated with it. There are verses where she says the same thing (i.e. verses 46 and 47). There are verses where she says the opposite thing (i.e. 52, 53, 57).

How did Mary know all of this? She must have learned them from the public teachings of the Rabbis (whether at the synagogue in Nazareth or in the temple in Jerusalem). She must have attended services and heard the Scriptures taught. She must have learned them in the home as well. She put considerable work into memorizing the Scripture. She put considerable work into meditating upon the Scripture. Her phraseology appears to flow together. She didn't woodenly quote from the Old Testament.

Once again, the application to you women is obvious. Are you a woman of Scripture? Do you know your Bible? Do you regularly read your Bible? Do you study your Bible? Or does the television drown it out? To get to the point of where Mary was, you cannot simply tune into Steve on Sunday mornings and expect to get there. It will require sacrifice and effort. You can't learn the Word without effort.

Have you taken advantage of the opportunities that we have offered here at Rock Valley Bible Church to encourage you in your study of the Scriptures? Once a month, the women gather for Bible Study. The women are reading through a book right now, to encourage you in this process as well? If you haven't taken advantage of these opportunities, is there something else filling in the gap? Is there some other Bible study that you are attending outside of what we are able to offer as a church? Are you and your husband actively pursuing the Scriptures together?

Is this important? Yes. We know God through His word. As you know the Scripture better, it ought to increase your love for and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. My ministry of teaching the word is primarily devoted to the men. But that doesn't mean that I am not concerned with you women, and how you are progressing in your knowledge of the Scriptures. My heart is to see Rock Valley Bible Church filled with men and women, who know the Scriptures and love the God of the Scriptures! Mary definitely knew them and has become our model.

Mary was ...
5. A Woman of Blessing (verse 48b; 11:27-28)

I want to end with the last half of verse 48, "For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed."

Let us not over-react to the Mariolatry of the Roman Catholic Church. Our tendency is to react to their adoration and worship of Mary by ignoring Mary. Yet, the Bible ascribes and honors that we ought to bestow upon her. We ought to call her a blessed woman. Of all the women in the world, God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Think about the blessings that she would have experienced by having Jesus in her

home:

She would have been able to witness first hand, unlike anybody in the world what God was like. She would have been able to have a resident theologian in the home at all times to answer all of her Bible questions. Perhaps you mothers would like this: she would have enjoyed a completely obedient child, who never talked back or fussed or complained even once.

In each of my points this morning, I have demonstrated was Mary was (a woman of faith, praise, humility, and Scripture), and have called you women to be like her. At this point, you might think that my fifth point can't apply to you this morning, because you can't be blessed in the same way as Mary was. Not quite. Turn over to chapter 11. Let me show you a fabulous verse that ought to encourage you very much.

We read in Luke 11:27, "And it came about while [Jesus] said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.'" Here we have a fulfillment of the first generation after Mary blessing her, as Mary predicted in Luke 1:48b. Certainly, she was blessed.

But, the next verse makes all the difference in the world. Look at how Jesus responded. But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it" (Luke 11:28). Imagine the scenario. Jesus was teaching the crowds some marvelous truth. Someone said, "May your mother be blessed!" Certainly, it would have been easy for Jesus, in humility, to accept such a commendation. But, in a way, he rebuked this woman and said, "No, rather may you be blessed, if you hear the word of God, and observe it." This is a tremendous encouragement to all of us! We can be blessed! We simply need to "hear the word of God and observe it."

Women, this morning you have heard the word of God. Mary's example stands as a model worthy to follow. She was ...

1. A Woman of Faith (verses 26-45).
2. A Woman of Praise (verses 46-47)
3. A Woman of Humility (verses 48a, 49)
4. A Woman of Scripture (verses 50-55)

In each of these instances, you are to follow her example. She was also a blessed woman. Jesus said that the blessed woman is the one who hears, believes, and obeys the word of God. You have heard the word of God. Will you observe it?

My burden in this message has been to encourage and help the women. I turn now to the men with one exhortation. Husbands, will you do everything in your power to help your wife observe the word of God? Be an example yourself. Lead your wife in these things. Be a man of faith. Be a man of praise. Be a man of humility. Be a man of Scripture. Most likely, you will find that you will have ... a woman of blessing.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 11, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
