



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

You can really tell that Christmas is right around the corner. Other than not a lot of snow after our warm week, the tell-tale signs of Christmas are not too hard to find. Christmas trees and wreaths are in short supply as most have been purchased. Lights decorate homes in Park Falls. And most stores are promoting last minute holiday shopping. Craft fairs and cookie exchanges are over for another year. And now, Christmas Eve is just 5 days away.

But what really makes me realize that the holiday season is here is the music. That is the number one thing for me that brings the reality of Christmas home. On the radio in the car, the musical specials on TV and even now as I write this message in my home office Alexa is playing Christmas tunes from some of my favorite artists.

Many of us enjoy all these favorites that are only sung this time of year. Even though we are not able, due to Covid, to go and sing at the nursing homes in town, we have an awesome opportunity to sing Christmas songs this evening, right here at Christ the Servant. Thank you to Kathy, who has offered to accompany our not always in tune voices to sing our way through the Birth of our Savior Jesus. I hope that you will all come and join us. And I trust that we

can all be singing these special songs with our hearts in unison. There is only one reason for this season!

I do want to say that there is nothing wrong with singing secular songs this time of year. However, a bit of caution, if we sing only songs about Santa, reindeer, and jingle bells we neglect the greatest gift our God has ever given to us. It is never right to shun Christ or the importance of His birth. We don't want to be found without His song in our hearts. And we need to have that right song in our hearts especially during Christmas.

This morning in our Gospel lesson we have a great example of a Christmas song. In fact, they are the words of the very first Christmas song ever sung. This song does not talk about jingle bells, holly, or reindeer. It has nothing to do with snow or sleigh bells or Santa. This song has everything to do with what really make Christmas "Christmas". This song was all about sin and salvation, the gift of God's Grace sent to a fallen human race. This song was all about Jesus.

This song was not sung by angels, priests, or prophets. It was sung by a humble young woman who God had chosen to bear His Son. Her name was Mary. She was the mother of our Lord. She was an ordinary young woman, almost a child. Yet God chose her as part of His plan to save the world. Her song is the first Christmas song ever sung, and it is a true reflection of her faith. Faith that believed that God loves sinners. Faith that believed that He could even love and use an ordinary person like her.

We call Mary's song, the Magnificat. That word, Magnificat, is a Latin word which means "he, she, or it glories or magnifies." The title of this song is simply, "She glorifies", an appropriate name for this wonderful song of praise from Mary to her God.

Now while it is true that there was nothing "extra-special" about Mary, God chose her. She did not deserve God's favor, nor did she earn this privilege. God simply chose her. She was a recipient of God's grace. In the same manner, her song does not reflect a faith that Mary came up with on her own. No, she was expressing the faith that God had created in her through hearing His Word, delivered by stories of old and the angel Gabriel. The fact that Mary believed was not a credit to her, it is a credit to her God. Her faith was a gift from God. And her faith, her song, points us straight to God. This song is not about Mary at all, it is all about Jesus.

Let's look for a minute at this song of praise. It is very similar to many of the songs, which are recorded as Psalms in the Old Testament. After all, Mary was a child of Israel. She believed in God, and she had heard the Word of God through the Old Testament Scriptures. So, it is no wonder that her song uses some of the same words found in the Psalms, as she knew them well. Her praise to God is patterned after the praises of the faithful who had gone before her. And it is no wonder that many of our songs of today do the same thing. We sing back to God the very Word He has given us. Mary was singing back to God promises He had given for centuries to the Israelites. And those promises were coming true. Before her very eyes, the Miracle of miracles was taking place in her womb.

Verse 48-49 Mary sings, "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name." There are a few references to things in the Old Testament that last for all generations. They are the Lord's name, His will, His praise, His faithfulness, His reign, His truth, His forgiveness, and His presence.

Mary is called blessed because she is to give birth to all these promises of God that were growing within her. Jesus, the baby she will deliver to the world is the embodiment of all these Promises of God. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He is God's Truth, God's Faithfulness, God's Forgiveness and God's presence with His people. Jesus will provide God's salvation for all generations. He is the one through whom all the world will be saved. He is not just Mary's baby. He is Mary's Savior and that is why she is blessed.

This song was sung when Mary was with child. This is a song that remembers events of the past. It is a true song of faith, a faith that looks forward. Mary did not yet know the details of how her son would save the world. She simply believed God's Word that said He would. Mary knew that the main event is not the birth of this child, but the salvation He would one day bring to all the earth.

And just as Mary was blessed because the Lord was with her. All people are blessed with whom Christ dwells. Each one of you is blessed because Christ dwells within you. He has given you faith to believe in Him through the Holy Spirit. And He has done everything necessary for your salvation. He talks to you through His word. He feeds you at His table of grace with his body and blood. He watches over you and protects you. He is always with you, and He someday will call you home to be with Him.

So, I hope that this Christmas you will not be lacking a song, nor will we be confused about what song to sing. Let the song of Mary be your inspiration as we rejoice with the same faith that she had so many years ago. The promises of God remain the same and we share the same Savior.

Celebrate the birth of our savior with a song in your heart. Come tonight and sing songs. Sing songs like the Magnificat that give all honor and praise to God. May the peace of Jesus be in your songs and your hearts for you are blessed! Thanks be to God. AMEN