

DATE: December 21, 2008

TEXT: Luke 1: 39-56

TITLE: "Mary's Song"



We are continuing in this Christmas season to look at Mary, the mother of Jesus and see the lessons she has to teach us about Christian living.

Last week we looked at what is called the Annunciation. This week we are looking at what is called in Latin "the Magnificat." Literally this means "glorifies". It is one of the most beautiful pieces of prose ever written. It is a daily prayer for Catholics called the "Hail Mary" and it is a weekly vesper song for the Episcopal Church. This morning I will share four lessons from our text.

Lesson # 1 Notice in Mary the spontaneity of praise. Mary encounters her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth tell Mary of her blessedness and Mary immediately breaks forth in a praise of God. Is our praise of God spontaneous? Constant praise of God is a sign of spiritual maturity. When we can praise God when things go well and when we can praise God when things are difficult we have learned the lesson of praise. *James 1: 2 commands...*

Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work in you so that you may be (spiritually) mature and complete.

I read this story this week. A woman worked as a secretary at a large church. She had been taught to answer the phone with the words "God Bless you, First Church." One day as she was reaching to answer the phone her arm hit a plant and it fell on the floor spilling all the soil. She then mentioned God.... But it was not a blessing. She then finished putting the phone to her ear and said "God Bless you, First Church." We know her praise was automatic and had little meaning... her first expression was her true feelings.

Let me say I believe this is one of the great strengths of our church. I believe we are god at praising God in our worship and in our ministries. Do you know that last weekend we had almost 400 people in our church hearing the message of Christ. In both Breakfast in Bethlehem and in the pageant we had many, many people form our community that we were able to share the message of Christ with who normally are not real active in Church. Praise the Lord

Also last weekend I had the chance to go to Villa Maria and hear our choir and bell choir

share almost a half hour of music. What a blessing our choir is to us. Week after week they lead us in the praise of God. Week after week I want to stand and praise God... and upon occasion I want to sink to my knees in praise of God. We at New Bedford are called to praise the Lord.

Mary reacts with praise as she faced hardship and as she faced praise... are we able to daily and constantly praise God for the blessing He gives us, and for the difficulties that we face.

Lesson # 2 Mary knew of the importance of seeking support and fellowship from another person of God. Last week we saw the cost of obedience as we looked at Mary. Mary was blessed. She had received a miraculous conception. The problem was no one, including Joseph believed her. God sent her to the one person who would understand the idea of a miraculous conception... her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth as soon as she saw Mary broke forth in words of praise and support. Imagine the feelings of Mary... "Oh thank you Lord... finally someone who believes me supports me and loves me... oh thank you Lord."

The application to our lives is this. We too need fellow believers to support and love us. Non-Christians can not give that support and understanding. *1 Cor. 2: 12-14* gives us this truth...

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God...This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but by words taught us by the Holy Spirit. The man without the Holy Spirit does not accept the things that come from God, for (these truths) are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them.

We see the truth of this scripture almost constantly as we speak to non-Christians. I was speaking a little while ago to a person and the small talk turned to T.V. The person asked "Do you watch such and such T.V. show". I said no and was going to move on in conversation but the person asked, "well why not it's a great show." I answered in a non-condemning way that for me as a Christian I did not feel it was good to put that show in my mind. I did not say it was wrong for all Christians..... but for me it is not healthy. I could tell that this person did not really understand what I was saying. This person used, as the text in Corinthians said, human wisdom and could not understand that human wisdom is not the same as Spiritual truth. We as Christians understand. We know that *Colossians 3:2* states "**set your minds on things above not on earthly things.**" Our bodies are the temple of God. The Holy Spirit resides within us. Our minds are to be kept pure for the worship of our Lord. We can share and support each other when the world fails to understand

and even laughs at us.

I am sure we have all experienced the difficulty of talking about subjects such as World hunger, marriage, homosexuality, abortion and I could go on and on because non-Christians use "human wisdom" as their source of truth. We use the Word of God as our source of truth.

We need each other. The Lord has given us the Church. We have a place to come to share in fellowship and love and support with fellow Christians. We need a sharing community. My hope and prayer is that, that is what this church is for you. Yes a place to worship, but also a place to share and love and laugh and cry and experience the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to be the Elizabeth's in the Body of Christ.

Lesson # 3 Note in our text the great humility of Elizabeth *READ verse 42-45.*

In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Elizabeth humbly recognized that her child was secondary to Mary's child. This is very difficult. It has been my experience that parents of new babies or unborn babies believe their child is

the most beautiful, greatest child in the world. Over the years, there have been many great kids in this church but I know Adam and Erin were the greatest. And I know Alex is the cutest grandchild ever born. I read this story this week

On the first day of school little Johnny approached the teachers desk and handed the teacher a note from his mother. She opened it up and read it...."Dear Teacher, At times Johnny may be disobedient. When this happens go to him and spank the child sitting right next to him. This will cause him to be afraid and he will be obedient."

Elizabeth was humble. She subordinated her interest to the glory of God. It is so easy to be proud. I know it is for me. Proud of our children. Proud of accomplishments. Proud of our wealth. Proud of our faith. Let us follow the example of Elizabeth... let us be humble, praising God for the blessing He has given us. Let us subordinate our interests to the glory of God.

Lesson # 4 Note that while the central theme of our text is praise the secondary theme is God's protection and exultation of the poor. *READ verse 51-53*

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

I'll be honest, I get uncomfortable when I read in scripture about the Christian responsibility to

the poor. I am uncomfortable when I watch the evening news shows and see the hunger and disease in the world. It would be so much easier to close my eyes and pretend that is not real. I am uncomfortable when I travel to Mexico and see abject poverty. But as a Christian I need to open my eyes and respond in love. *William Barclay in his commentary* on this text states this

A non-Christian society is an acquisition society where each man is out to amass as much as he can get. A Christian society is a society where no man dare to have too much while others have too little, where every man must get, only to give away.

I do not believe Scripture teaches that money and wealth are in and of themselves are sinful. Our Lord teaches that placing our wealth over our faith is sinful. Jesus teaches in Matthew 19 that it is very difficult for the wealthy to place Christ first in their lives. Money is powerful and lures us into it's worship. We are responsible for the starving people of Somalia. We are responsible for the homeless refugees in the Sudan. We are responsible for the hunger in our own area.

One common complaint that is often heard is the statement "all the church ever does is ask for money." Let me say that is not true.... we as a church ask for far more than just money... in the name of Christ we ask for a person's life... and yes we ask for that constantly. Let a person's money

follow a person's soul and life.

In this Christmas season, let us remember that we are to give... not just to receive

We have seen our text teach us that we need each other we need fellowship and support. We have seen the need for humility. To subordinate our interests to the glory of God. Finally we have seen that part of that love must extend to the hurting people in our area and in the world. On Christmas eve we will conclude our look at this text.

AMEN