

Luke 1:39-55

A Mighty God Who Does Mighty Things

What kind of a God does this? For a lack of a better term, she's a "nobody." There's nothing about her that should draw anyone's attention. She is just another Jewish girl engaged to another Jewish boy who happens to do some carpentry work. Then the angel Gabriel shows up who tells her she will be the mother of the Son of the Most High. As she wonders how this is going to work with her being a virgin and all, the angel tells her, "**The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God**" (Luke 1:35).

Here's a young teenage girl—marriage customs of the day would put her around 13-15 years old—who has just been told that she is going to be pregnant and be the mother of God's child. And the crazy thing: Mary believes it. "I am the Lord's servant," she says accepting the Father's will. Incredible. What mature faith.

At the same time, she *is* a pregnant teenager who is not married. I couldn't imagine what that would have been like trying to explain to mom and dad. Would they actually believe her that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Would anyone believe her? It would take an angel visiting him in a dream to convince her own fiancé Joseph. I'm sure it wasn't long before the rumor mill started rolling. What a juicy story to share and discuss! What this must have done to her reputation and how other people treated her. By no means was this going to be easy for Mary. What kind of God does this?

No wonder she decides to go visit her relative Elizabeth. It would be good to get out of town and clear her head a bit. Then there's the fact that Elizabeth, in her old age, also miraculously was pregnant. But how was Mary going to explain this all to Elizabeth?

When Mary arrives at Elizabeth's house, before they can finish the necessary how-do-you-do's, Elizabeth shouts out in a loud voice, "**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 the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!**" (v. 42-45).

I'm sure Mary has to be relieved. Any awkwardness that might have been there is gone. No need for long explanations. By the working of the Spirit Elizabeth knows and she praises God while assuring and encouraging this young mom-to-be. No

judging. No questions. No strange looks. Just celebration! Maybe it's one of those things where Mary knew she was pregnant, but now it's really real. And Mary cannot help herself as she sings, **“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors”** (v.46-55).

Are you feeling that way today? Are you glorifying the Lord, proclaiming his greatness this holiday season? That may be hard to do when the greatness of all the things you need to get done before Christmas takes up so much of our minds. It might be hard when your plans for Christmas have already fallen through, when you aren't as ready as you would like to be, when we are wrapped up grumbling and complaining about one thing or another. It's hard to proclaim God's greatness when we allow ourselves to be caught up with a world that bemoans the greatness of this problem, great failures of this group, while fighting to be heard and recognized. Maybe you are proclaiming the greatness of God because you know the right things to say and can put on the face. But in reality your soul aches as you struggle.

Is your soul rejoicing in God your Savior? It may be difficult with how over-commercialized and romanticized the Christmas season has become so you are desensitized to the joy that God sends his own Son for us. Are you rejoicing with Mary? Remember this song comes from a young girl whose plans for life have been drastically altered and won't go back to “normal.” Her plan was to be married, maybe have some kids with Joseph, and live a pretty normal, regular life for a Jewish girl. Then an angel shows up and changes everything. We don't have angels showing up but you've had your life plans change. How have you responded when God's plans are different from your plans? Are you still rejoicing? When God's blessings also mean there will be different struggles and calling you to trust in the Lord, are you still singing his praises? Are you starting to realize that there is no going back and wondering, what kind of God does this?

It's encouraging to hear that God looks on Mary, his humble servant. But what about you? For many this is an especially lonely time of year. Loved ones are no

longer with us. You aren't able to be with people you care about. You might feel alone because of something you did. You might feel alone because no one knows what you are going through right now. What kind of God would take notice of me?

Sometimes it seems like we've forgotten who God is. At least, that what it looks like when we continue in the sin even when we know better. It seems that way when we ignore God's warnings and call to repent; that is, change our way of thinking and get in line with his own. It seems that way when we question how he is handling our current situation. Where's the strength of his arm when those who fear him continue to suffer? Where's this lifting up when the humble and meek are walked all over and the proud continue to get what they want and are successful? When is it going to be my turn, Lord? When are you going to lift me up so things are just a little bit better? When is it going to be my turn to get a little bit ahead? We don't want much; but a little validation and recognition for your hard work would be nice, right?

Have you forgotten who God is? Notice all the Lord has done in Mary's song: he has performed mighty deeds...he has scattered...he has brought down...he has lifted up...he has filled...he has helped. Mary speaks in the past recognizing, yes, God did those things. At the same time it's as good done for the future too because God will most certainly continue to do those things. Have you forgotten? So easily we see the past blessings that God has given to us, we say thank you, and seem to forget. We call it being realist. We say we are being good managers. Or is it not trusting God's promises so we hold back on ministry just in case? What if? Do we hold back on personal ministry, sharing Jesus' love and serving our neighbor because, what if?

What kind of God does this? Too easily do I forget who God really is and who I am. Holy is his name. Not only is he perfect and good; he's separate and above the rest. He's independent of you and doesn't need me. Our best efforts fall dreadfully short of coming close to being at his level and I dare to question him, to call him a liar by doubting his promises. Be warned, God cannot be mocked. His strong arm should come swiftly down to crush and scatter us for trying to give him, the Mighty One, advice.

Instead he is mindful of his humble servants. He knows if he came to you in strength, we would cower in fear. Who can stand in his presence? If he came as someone rich and powerful, we would question why he would take any interest in us. Instead, he hides his mighty strength in the arms of a tiny baby to do great things for you. He chooses to come to you through a virgin teenager to lift us up.

He takes on our flesh and blood along with our weaknesses and infirmities to help us in our times of needs.

What kind of God does this? This is Immanuel which means “God with us” because that’s what He is: with us. He comes to bless the nations and to fulfill the promises made to Abraham and his descendants. Through him all nations on earth are blessed. With his mighty arms he will scatter the demons and free those bound by sin. He will feed the thousands and lift up the lame to walk. He comes to lift up the humble sitting with the lowly outcasts, the tax cheaters, the prostitutes and strippers, the fishermen, and sinners. He says to the Father, “**Here I am, I have come to do your will,**” as he lives in your place. He comes to serve his servant and to give his life to pay the price for your soul with holy blood that flows through his veins. By his sacrifice of his own body once and for all Jesus has made you holy and at one with God. With his mighty arms stretched out on that cross he brings down the ruler of this world, Satan, and crushes his head. The Father hasn’t forgotten about you. He remembers to be merciful, for Jesus’ sake. For Jesus came to do the Father’s will on your behalf, and did. It is finished. And in the same flesh that he receives from his mother Mary that bled on that cross for me, he rises from the dead to live for me.

With those same mighty hands he’s lifted you up from death through the waters of baptism to a new life with him. He stretches out those arms to give you your daily bread. He stretches out his hand to fill your hungry soul with the good things of his body and blood to remind you this once-for-all sacrifice is for you and the forgiveness of your sins. He feeds your starving soul with his life-giving Word. You are living breathing example of how the Mighty one has done great things.

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord! Blessed is Mary the mother of our Lord. She is blessed because God chose her and lifted her up. Blessed are you! God chose you to be his own and lifted you to be a child of God. Proclaim the greatness of God—all your sins are forgiven in Jesus’ name. Proclaim his greatness—God is with us and for us. Proclaim his greatness—your neighbor needs to hear it as you love them and serve them. What kind of God does this? That he would choose someone like Mary to accomplish his task of bringing salvation to the world, that he would choose me to work through to share the good news that saves, that he would operate in this way, he must be a mighty God who does mighty things. Amen.