

# MARY'S MAGNIFICAT

*"And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."*

*Luke 1:46, 47*

MARY'S Magnificat was a song of faith. You have thought, perhaps, that you could easily have sung this song if you had been as highly favored as she was, but are you sure that you could have done so? Have you ever realized the difficulties under which this hymn was composed and sung? If not, permit me to remind you that the wondrous birth which had been promised to her had not then been accomplished and in her mind there must have been a consciousness that many would doubt her statements. The visitation of the angel and all its consequences would seem to be ridiculous and even impossible to many to whom she might venture to mention the circumstances—no, more than that—would subject her to many cruel insinuations which would scandalize her character! And that which conferred upon her the highest honor that ever fell to woman would, in the judgment of many, bring upon her the greatest possible dishonor. We know what suspicions even Joseph had and that it was only a Revelation from God that could remove them. Mary would have been sorely troubled if she had been influenced by her natural feelings and had been swayed by external circumstances.

It was only her wondrous faith—in some respects, her matchless faith, for no other woman had ever had such ablessed trial of faith as she had—it was only her matchless faith that she should be the mother of the holy Child Jesus, that sustained her. Truly blessed was she in believing that and blessed, indeed, was she in that even before there was an accomplishment of the things that were told her by the angel, she could sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Unbelief would have said, "Wait." Fear would have said, "Be silent." But faith could not wait and could not be silent! She must sing and sing she did most sweetly. I call your attention to this fact because when we ourselves have a song to sing unto the Lord, we may perhaps be tempted not to sing it till our hopes are accomplished and our faith has been exchanged for fact. Brothers and Sisters, if this is your case, do not wait, for your song will spoil if you do! There is another song to be sung for the accomplished mercy, but there is a song to be sung now for the promised mercy! Therefore, let not the present hour lose the song which is due to it.

I am not going to expound the text so much as to ask you to practice it with me. So, first, let us sing. let ussing after Mary's manner. .

## 1. Firstly, then, LET US SING.

Let us sing, first, because singing is the natural language of joy. Do not even the ungodly sing when their corn and wine increase? Have they not their harvest hymns and vintage songs? Do they not sing right merrily when they go forth to the dance? And if the wicked sing thus, shall the righteous be silent? Are the jubilant songs all made for the ungodly and the dirges for us? Are they to lift high the festive strain and we to be satisfied with the "Dead March" in Saul, or some such melancholy music as that? No, Brothers and Sisters, if they have joy, much more have we! Their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but ours is the shining of a star that shall never be quenched. Let us sing, then, for our joy abounds and abides. Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." If the joy of the Lord is your strength, why not express it in holy song? Why should not your joys have a tongue as well as the joys of ungodly men? When warriors win victories, they shout. Have we won no victories through Jesus Christ our Lord? When men celebrate their festivals, they sing. Are there any festivals equal to ours—our Paschal Supper, our passage of the Red Sea, our Jubilee, our expectation of the coronation of our King, our hymn of victory over all the hosts of Hell? Oh surely if the children of earth sing, the children of Heaven

ought to sing far more often, far more loudly, far more harmoniously than they do! Come, then, let us sing because we are glad in the Lord!

Let us sing, too, because singing is the language of Heaven. It is thus that they express themselves up yonder. Many of the songs and other sounds of earth never penetrate beyond the clouds. Sighs and groans and clamors have never reached those regions of serenity and purity! But they do sing there. Heaven is the home of sacred song and we are the children of Heaven. Heaven's light is in us! Heaven's smile is upon us! Heaven's all belongs to us and, therefore—

*"We would begin the music here,  
And so our souls should rise.  
Oh, for some Heavenly notes to bear  
Our passions to the skies!"*

The music of joy and the music of Heaven should often be upon our lips in the form of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Let us also sing because singing is sweet to the ears of God. I think I may venture to say that even the song of birds is sweet to Him, for in the 104<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where it is written, "The Lord shall rejoice in His works," it is also mentioned that the birds "sing among the branches." Is there anything sweeter in the world than to wake up, about four or five o'clock in the morning, just at this time of the year and hear the birds singing as if they would burst their little throats and, pouring out in a kind of contest of sweetness, their little hearts in joyous song? I believe that in the wild places of the earth, where no human foot has ever defiled the soil, God loves to walk. When I have been alone among the fir trees, inhaling their sweet fragrance, or have wandered up the hill where the loudest voice could not be answered by another voice, for no man was there, I have felt that God was there and that He loved to listen to the song of birds that He had created. Yes, even the harshly croaking ravens He hears when they cry!

I do not think that mere music is sweet to God's ears when it comes from man in lewdness, attended with lascivious thoughts. And even sacred music which is sweet in itself, when used for mere amusement, must be an abomination to the Most High when it is so degraded. But He loves to hear us sing when we sing His praises from our hearts. Do you not delight to hear your own children sing and is there anything sweeter than a song from a child? At the Orphanage, the other day, they brought me a little boy who had just been taken in. I felt a special interest in him because his father had been a minister of the Gospel. They told him to sing to me and it was a very sweet song—one of Mr. Sankey's hymns—which came from his lips. His singing quite touched my heart. Had it been my own child, I do not doubt that it would have touched my heart still more! And God loves to hear His children sing. Even your discords, as long as they do not affect your heart, but are only of sound and not of soul, shall please Him. What a beautiful simile is used in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm—"O You that inhabit the praises of Israel!" Just as God's ancient people, during the feast of tabernacles, dwelt under booths made from the branches of trees, so Jehovah is represented as having made for Himself a tabernacle out of the praises of His people! They are only like fading branches that soon turn brown, yet the great Lord of All condescends to sit beneath them and as we, each one, bring a new branch, plucked from the tree of Mercy, we help to make a new tabernacle for the Most High to dwell in!

One reason why they sing in Heaven is because all there are seeking to please the heart of God. They sing not merely that they may practice Psalmody and have their voices in good order, or that they may interest the strangers who are constantly arriving from these nether lands, or even that they may please each other and delight the angels, but unto the Lord is their perpetual song, for He delights in it. Let us also sing unto Him as long as we live. Sometimes it would be well for us to make hymns, rather than to repress the making of them, as we often do. The Moravians were accustomed to gather up in their churches the very poorest rhymes and dibbles that were made by the brethren—and they used to shape them as best they could into something like a singable form. Their hymnbook has in it a great number of hymns that I should not like to hear you sing! But, for

all that, I like the spirit that was in the early Moravians. "Let us each one try to make a hymn," they said. "Let us encourage one another to express some personal experience of our life, for we have each one of us had some special point of God's Grace illustrated in us." I would that the men who can so well write popular songs and give to the people attractive words and tunes to sing in the street or in the home, would consecrate their talents to a better purpose by writing hymns and spiritual songs to the praise and glory of God. We would then be the richer in our Psalmody, as, indeed, we always are when God sends us a true revival of religion, for revivals of religion

But if we cannot ourselves compose hymns, let us sing those that somebody else has made and let us sing the right ones—those that suit us best. There are some hymns that I cannot sing at present—they are too high for me, but I shall sing them, by-and-by. There are others that are too low for me—I cannot get down to such depths of doubt and trembling as the poets seem to have been in when they composed them. Every Christian should have some particular hymn that he loves best, so that when his heart is merriest, he should sing that hymn. How many good old people I have known who used to sit and sing, or walk about the house, just humming or crooning—

*"When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I bid farewell to every fear,  
And wipe my weeping eyes."*

Some have other favorites, but whatever our choice is, I think it is well to have a hymn which, although we have not ourselves written it, has, nevertheless, been made our own by our circumstances and experiences. When we have fixed on such a hymn as that, let us sing it unto the Lord again and again!

Let us not be among these who make excuses for not singing. One says that he has no voice. Then, sing with your heart, Brother! Perhaps even your voice would improve if you used it more, but if there is such a grating noise about it that you dare not sing when another person is listening, get alone and sing to the Lord.

Do not say that you are unable to sing because you are always in company. I would have you make it your general rule to sing in almost any company where your lot may be cast, though, sometimes it is not right to cast your pearls before swine. Watch your opportunity. If all in the room are silent, perhaps you had better be silent, too. But if one of your workfellows feels that he must sing a song and he has taken the liberty to do it, now is your turn and you may sing, too. I remember being on Mount St. Bernard, spending a night with the monks at the hospice. There was a piano which had been given by the Prince of Wales, and the different persons who were spending the night there, sang and played by turns. One sang a Spanish hymn and another a German hymn. And when it came to our turn, we sang—

*"There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."*

And why should we not sing it? Had we not as much a right to sing as the other people had? Do not abate your rights and privileges, dear Friends, but if others sing, you sing, too, and never mind who listens! It will do no man any harm to hear the praises of the Lord!

And do not say that you cannot sing because of your occupation! Your hands may be just as busy as usual even while the songs of Zion are rising from your lips. You may even be writing, or otherwise mentally occupied and yet, at the same time, your heart may be ascending to God in praise!

Make no excuse because you are ill. Sometimes a little song between the sheets is very sweet in the ears of God, even though it has to be accompanied by sighs and groans. Pain makes every note come out with great effort, yet I believe God bends down His ears to hear such singing as that. I have known birds in cages sing better than those outside—and the Lord sometimes puts us in a cage on purpose that He may hear us sing the sweeter. He loves to hear His sick children sing His praises upon their beds and His high praises in the midst of the furnace of affliction. Are you very poor? Then sing from your heart to the Lord and your music shall be better than silver and gold unto God! Even death, itself, need not stay our songs—let us sing right up to this side of the Glory gate—there is no fear about our keeping on with our song on the other side! As long as we can sing here, let us do so, praising the Lord right up to the last hour of our lives—then shall our voices be tuned immediately to noble songs, for in a moment, we shall—

*“Sing with rapture and surprise  
His loving-kindness in the skies!”*

II. Now, passing on to our second point, LET US SING AFTER MARY’S MANNER, as far as that manner may be transferable to us. No bird ought to try to sing exactly like another. The blackbird ought not to imitate the thrush, nor the thrush the canary—let them all keep to their own notes and let each one of us sing his own song unto the Lord. Yet I think we shall see that there is something about Mary’s music that will suit us all.

First, let us sing reverently. Mary was very joyful, but there was nothing in her song that would strike you as being irreverent, vulgar, or commonplace. I am not squeamish about music, but I must confess that I hardly like to hear the high praises of God sung to the tune of a comic song or of a dance. There is a certain congruity about things that must be observed and some good music may have associated with it such strange ideas that we had better let it alone till those associations have died out, lest, haply, while we are uttering holy words, some people may be reminded by the tune of unholy things! Mary sings very reverently and so should we. And though I like some of the new tunes very much and am glad that they are so popular, yet, for my own part, I like a good old Psalm tune much better. It seems to me like going away from the snows of Lebanon to seek after the stale cisterns of earth when we leave the old music, and the old hymns, and the old Psalms for any of your modern melodies. Still, if you can praise God better with the new songs, do so, but let it always be done reverently.

But, secondly, Mary praised God with personal devotion. Notice how intensely personal her song is. Elizabeth is there, yet Mary sings as though she were all alone—“My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” It seemed as though her song meant something like this, “Elizabeth is glad, but I, Mary, am also glad, and I have a gladness which is all my own, which even Elizabeth cannot know. ‘My soul does magnify the Lord.’” It ought to be so in our congregations—we should join with our fellow Christians in their songs of praise, but we must always mind that our personal note is not omitted—“My soul does magnify the Lord.” Do you not think that some of you too often forget this? You come to hear sermons and sometimes you do not come to the assembly as much as you ought for the purpose of directly and distinctly praising God in your own personality and individuality. The music is delightful to us as it rises from thousands of voices, but to God it can be pleasant only as it comes from each heart. “My soul”—whether other people are praising the Lord or not—“my soul”—for I have a personal indebtedness to You, my God, and there is a personal union between You and me. I love You and You love me and, therefore, even if all other souls are dumb, “my soul does magnify the Lord.” In this fashion, dear Brothers and Sisters, have a song to yourself and mind that it is thoroughly your own.

Thirdly, in Mary’s song we see great spirituality. You observe how she puts this matter twice over—“My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” She is far from being content with mere lip service. Her language is poetic, but she is not satisfied with her language. I have no doubt that her voice was exceedingly sweet, but she does not say anything about that, but she does speak of, “my soul,” and, “my spirit.” O dear Friends, let us never be satisfied with any kind of worship which does not take up the whole of our inner and higher nature! It is what you are within, that you really are before the living God! And it is quite a secondary matter how loud the chant may be, or how sweet the tune of your hymn, or how

delightfully you join in it unless your spirit, your soul, truly praises the Lord! You can sometimes do this in “songs without words”—and he that has no voice for singing can, after this fashion, magnify the Lord with his soul and spirit.

Mary also praised the Lord intelligently. Notice how she sings, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” You observe that she varies the names which she uses and she varies them with great propriety. She magnifies Jehovah. She makes Him great, which is the proper thing to do concerning Jehovah. But she rejoices in God, her Savior. In that aspect, her Lord comes nearer to her and becomes more immediately the object of joy to her, so she rejoices in God her Savior. She dwells first upon Jehovah’s power to save—“My soul does magnify the Lord.” She seems to see the two points—the greatness and the goodness of the Lord Jehovah, yet her Savior. The Ruler and Lawgiver, yet the gracious One who pardons and blots out sin.

Mary praised God enthusiastically, for the reduplication of the terms, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,” indicates the fervor and ardor of her praise. It is natural to us to repeat ourselves when we begin to glow with holy gladness, so Mary says, “My soul, my natural life—my spirit, my newborn, my intense, diviner life—my soul, my mind, my intellect—my spirit, my affections, my heart, my emotions, my entire being, my soul and spirit praise the Lord.” She did not need to add that her body praised the Lord, for the very sound of her voice bore witness that her body was joining with her soul and spirit—so that her triple nature was magnifying the Lord. There was enthusiasm in her song and if ever any of us ought to be stirred to the very depths of our spirit, it is when we are praising the Lord. Sing, Brothers and Sisters, sing sweetly, but sing loudly, too, unto God, your strength!

Further, we may sing, as Mary did, Divinely. I mean, of course, with regard to the object of her song. So let it be with us. “My soul does magnify”—a Doctrine? A church! A priest?—God forbid! “My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in”—the success of my pastor’s ministry? Yes, it may do so, but that is one of the inferior themes for joy. “My spirit has rejoiced in” my own success in casting out devils and working miracles? Yes, it may do that, but still, it would be better to rejoice that our names are written in Heaven. The subject of Mary’s joy is nothing low, nothing less than Heavenly—“My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” If that is your declaration, you may well lift up your voice and sing—

*“Go up, go up, my heart,  
Dwell with your God above.”*

Note, again, that Mary sang evangelically and we must mind that we always do the same, for I am afraid that there are some popular hymns which have something that is not Gospel in them. And whenever there is a hymn that has the slightest taint of that sort in it, we ought to abandon it forever, however sweet its poetry may be. Mary sings, “My spirit does rejoice in God my Savior.” She was no Socinian and she was no Romanist—she knew that she needed a Savior and that she needed a God for her Savior, so her spirit rejoiced in God, her Savior. When we reach the highest point in our devotions, we still need a Savior. I do not at all like the boastful talk about “the higher life” in which some people seem to revel. We cannot have too high a life, but, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is about as big a prayer as I can manage at present. And often does my soul pray the dying thief’s prayer with such earnestness that his petition is forced to my lips, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” The place of the perfect does not suit me yet, at any rate, but the place of the publican and of the penitent more becomes me, as I think it does the most of us. Oh, yes, we still need a Savior! So, like Mary, we will sing about our Savior and even if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we cannot do without the blood of Jesus Christ constantly cleansing us from all sin—for we do still sin.

Once more, Mary praised the Lord with assurance—magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God—“who will, I hope, and pray, and sometimes believe, be my Savior”? I have spoilt the music—have I not—by putting in those words of my own? It goes better as Mary sang it, “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” She was quite assured of that fact and had not any doubts or fears

concerning it! It is well to get such a firm grip of the Savior that we rest in Him completely and so can sing to His praise. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot praise Jesus as I would because of my sins." And I reply to that remark—But my dear Friend, would you praise Him if you had no sins? Would He be needed by you and wanted by you then? Could He be of any use to you then? Would you feel any gratitude to Him? If you were not sinners, of what use would a Savior be to you? But we praise Him because though we are conscious of sin, we are equally conscious of cleansing in His precious blood! We take Him to be our All-in-All because we ourselves are nothing at all! If we had been of any account, He would have been just so much less, but, since we are nothing, there is the opportunity for Him to be All-in-All to us. Let us sing, then, to His praise! May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do so, even as He taught the Virgin Mary!

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, LET US SING WITH MARY'S PURPOSE. That was twofold—"My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

The first part of our PURPOSE, then, should be, "Magnify the Lord." How can we do that? We cannot really make God great, though that is the meaning of the word. How, then, can we magnify Him?

Well, first, let us think of His greatness. It will be really praising Him if we thus think of Him. You need not speak, but just ponder, weigh, consider, contemplate, meditate, ruminate upon the attributes of the Most High. Begin with His mercy if you cannot begin with His holiness, but take the attributes one by one and think about them. I do not know a single attribute of God which is not wonderfully quickening and powerful to a true Christian. As you think of any one of them, it will ravish you and carry you quite away. You will be lost in wonder, love and praise as you consider it. You will be astonished and amazed as you plunge into its wondrous depths and everything else will vanish from your vision. That is one way of making God great—by often thinking about Him!

The next way to make God great is by often drinking Him into yourself. The lilies stand and worship God simply by being beautiful—by drinking in the sunlight which makes them so charming and the dewdrops which glisten upon them. Stand before the Lord and drink Him in—do you understand what I mean by this expression? You go down to the seaside, when you are sickly, and you get out on a fine morning and there is a delightful breeze coming up from the sea. And you feel as if it came in at every pore of your body and you seem to be drinking in health at every breath you breathe! Do just like that in a spiritual sense with God—go down to the great sea of Godhead—magnify it by thinking how great it is and then take it into your very soul. God cannot be greater than He is, but He can be greater in you than He is at present! He cannot increase—there cannot be more of God than there is—but there may be more of God in you. More of His great love, more of His perfect holiness, more of His Divine power may be manifested in you and more of His likeness and light may be revealed through you. Therefore, make Him great in that respect.

And when you have done that, by His help, then try to make Him great by what you give forth, even as the rose, when she has satisfied herself with the sweet shower, no sooner does the clear shining come after the rain than she deluges the garden all around with her delicious perfume. Do you the same—first drink in all you can of the Deity and then exhale Him—breathe out again, in your praise, in your holy living, in your prayers, in your earnest zeal, in your devout spirit, the God whom you have breathed in! You cannot make more of God than He is, but you can make God more consciously present to the minds of others and make them think more highly of God by what you say and what you do!

I should like to be able to say, as long as I live, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I should like to have this as the one motto of my life from this moment until I close my eyes in death, "My soul does magnify the Lord." I would gladly preach that way! I would gladly eat and drink that way. I would even sleep that way, so that I could truthfully say, "I have no wish but that God should be great, and that I should help to make Him great in the eyes of others." Will not you also, dear Friends, make this the motto of your life—Psalm?

Then Mary added, “and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Is there any true praise without joy? Is not praise twin brother to joy? And do not joy and praise always dwell together? Rejoice, then, Beloved, not in the scenes you see, for they are fleeting, but rejoice in your Savior—in Him above everything else! Never let any earthly thing or any human being stand higher in your joy than Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Rejoice in Him as most surely yours, for, dear Brothers and Sisters, as a Believer, Christ is yours. If you are resting in Him, He belongs to you, so rejoice in your own Savior, for all of Christ is yours—not half a Savior, not one of His wounds for you and one for me, but all His wounds for you, and all for me! Not His thoughtful head for you, and His loving heart for me, but His head and His heart all for you and all for me—He is my Savior, He is your Savior—from His feet that were pierced by the nails to His head that was crowned with thorns!

Oh, how we ought to rejoice in Him, whatever our union with Him may cost us! Mary did not know what that wondrous visitation would cost her—and it was to cost her much, as Simeon said to her—“Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also.” But even though the sword must go through her soul, it mattered not to her, for unto her a Child was to be born, unto her a Son was to be given, who was to be called “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” So, if the fact that Christ is ours involves the bearing of the Cross, we are glad to bear it. It may involve suffering and shame and a thousand temptations and trials—if it is so, each true Believer can say with Mary, “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior”—in what He is, in what He is to me, in what He is to all His elect, in what He is to poor sinners, in what He is to God, in what He will be when He comes again and in what He will be throughout eternity.” If a little bird has nothing else to do but sing, it has a great deal to do. And if you and I should have, tonight, when we get home, nothing to do but to praise the Lord, we have the best employment out of Heaven! We must not think that Christians are wasting time when they pray and praise. Some fussy folk seem to imagine that we must always be talking, or attending meetings, or giving away tracts. Well, do as much as you can of all good things, but still, there must be times for quiet meditation, times for reading, times for praying and times for praising. There is no waste about such things—they are among the best spent hours that we ever have. To work is the stalk of the wheat, but to praise is the full corn in the ear. You and I, Beloved, are living to praise God. This is the culmination, the very apex of the pyramid of existence, pointing straight up to Heaven—that we praise God with all our heart and soul.

So then, to conclude, here is something for every child of God to do. You can all magnify the Lord and you may all rejoice in Him. You cannot all preach. If you could, who would there be to hear you? If all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But you can all praise God. If there is any Brother or Sister here who has only one talent, let not such an one say, “I cannot do anything.” You can magnify the Lord and you can rejoice in Him! To be happy in Him is to praise God. The mere fact of our being happy in the Lord makes music in His ears. If you are one of His children, you can be happy in Him, so get out of those doleful dumps and cast out that spirit of murmuring and complaint which so often possesses you! Pray the Lord to help you shake off your natural tendency to look on the dark side of everything, and say, “No, no, I must not do that. After all, I am not on the road to Hell—I am on the way to Heaven! And this world is the ante-room to Heaven, so my soul shall magnify the Lord and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior.”

I believe that if we could brighten the faces of all the saints and anoint them with the oil of gladness, we would do more than anything else could do to spread Christianity. I mean if we could make the children of the King rejoice, we should cause worldlings to ask, “Where does this joy come from?” And as they asked this question, we would give them the answer and so the Gospel would be sure to spread.

My closing word is concerning those who cannot magnify the Lord and cannot rejoice in God their Savior, those who cannot sing to God’s praise and who never have any joy in the Lord. Then how can they be His children? God has many children and they have many infirmities, but He never yet had a dumb child. They can, every one, say, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and they can all sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Prayer and praise are two of the sure signs of a true-born heir of Heaven. If you never praise God, my Friend, you can never go to Heaven. Till the Lord has taken out of you the praise of other things, the love of other things and given you the Grace to love Him and praise Him, you cannot enter into His Glory. May some poor soul here that

has not anything for which it could praise itself, begin now to praise that God who freely forgives the greatest sin and who is willing to cleanse the very blackest sinner, for He has given Christ to die, the Just for the unjust, that He may bring them unto God! Oh, begin to magnify Him and rejoice in Him now, and you will never want to leave off doing so, world without end! Amen.