**Advent: The Church Welcomes Christ**

Finding Joy in Jesus. . . Or, How do we glorify and enjoy God?

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said: “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.

Like peace, joy is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). But also like peace, joy must be chosen and maintained. It is not an automatic thing that over-whelms us, but (again, like peace), a byproduct of faith embracing God’s character and promises. Mary is a perfect example of a humble sinner who allowed joy to have its proper place in her heart, in spite of her poverty, and at this point, her situation of being an unwed mother-to-be! Let’s focus upon what created and sustained her joy.

**The Source of Joy (in God): Worship**. “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

 Joy happens when things, people, or events please us, or delight us, or make us happy. That is true for all joys, or everything we enjoy. But the kind of joy of which Mary speaks (and later, the angel announced) is joy par excellence, what we’ve called before, “MegaJoy.” MegaJoy happens when we experience, enjoy, treasure, and love God above all things so as to worship Him. Idolatry happens when we treasure and delight in something MORE than we do God.

**The Reason for Joy (in God):** **His righteousness** (the way His attributes work together so as to pardon sin while still maintaining His justice).

“His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.”

* We rejoice in God as our Savior. v. 47
* We rejoice in God for His condescension to bless sinners. vv. 48, 49a
* We rejoice in God for His holiness. v. 49b
* We rejoice in God for His mercy to His people. v. 50
* We rejoice in God for His justice in keeping His promise to exalt the humble and topple the prideful. vv. 51-53
* We rejoice in God’s faithfulness to His promise to create and bless a people for His name through the Seed of Abraham. vv. 54, 55

***So how can we learn to (more fully) rejoice in God?***

 *1. We increase our joy as we get better acquainted with Him.*

Mary’s humble response to the angel and her reflection afterwards betray a deep knowledge of the Torah, Prophets, and writings. Some have counted forty different allusions to references which underlie her praise-filled poem. How is your Bible reading? Not study, reading. Daily familiarity with God’s word becomes a life-sustaining habit of feeding on God’s promises, increasing our joy. John 15:11

*2.* *We increase our joy as we learn more fully to trust and obey Him.*

Mary’s knowledge was not merely academic. She was committed to obeying God. Our fallen nature craves independence. As we get to know God better through fellowship and prayer, we discover how He is for us, increasing our joy. John 16:24

 *3. We increase our joy in God as lesser joys fade and lose their hold on us.*

God is infinite, but we are not. We can concentrate on only a few things, and often these claim our joy. Sometimes these lesser joys, illegitimate and legitimate, vie for our affections. We will be more joyful as He becomes our joy. John 17:3, 26