

## INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] If you had to guess, what would you think the oldest Christmas Carol is? Silent Night was written in 1818 in a small village in Austria, but it is not the oldest. Hark the Herald Angels Sing is older. It was written in 1739 by Charles Wesley. "O Come all Ye Faithful" is older and believed to originally go all the way back to the 13th century. St. Francis of Assisi, mostly known for his love of animals, is credited with introducing Christmas carols into church services all the way in the 12th century. But there is an even older Christmas song. All the way back in the 4th century a bishop named Hilary of Poitiers wrote a hymn called "Jesus, Light of All Nations" about the three Magi encountering Christ. It is generally considered the first Christmas carol. But I believe the first Christmas carol was actually sung by Christ's mother Mary. Now, Mary didn't know what Christmas carols were and I am not sure if she intended up to sing what she has written.

2. [Need] But the probably illiterate Mary has written one of the most theologically rich songs in all of the Scriptures. It is filled with allusions to Scripture and the promises of God. In fact, it is so richly theologically that many believe Mary couldn't have written it. Remember that Mary is an ordinary young woman. She is probably illiterate and cannot even read. As a poor woman she probably did not receive a robust education, if she received one at all. Yet she writes the first and one of the best Christmas carols.

3. [Subject] Before Jesus is even born she writes these words describing what His birth will mean. We won't be able to plumb all of the depths of these verses. But I want to show you three reasons this song gives us to rejoice.

4. [Text] Luke 1:46-56

5. [Preview] Three reasons to rejoice this Christmas.

If you look in your bulletin you will see our first reason to rejoice. **Rejoice for how God has blessed you. Rejoice for how God has blessed you.**

Mary begins this song with her personal reasons for rejoicing.

But I think that we have much to gain by examining her words.

She begins by saying **"My soul magnifies the Lord"**

These verses and this song are commonly referred to as the magnificat.

It is the latin translation of the first part of these verses "magnify"

But what does magnify mean?

It sounds vaguely familiar, but it is not a word we normally use in our every day speech.

To magnify means to enlarge.

It is to gain a larger vision of how great and wonderful God is.

Another way to say it would be "God is even bigger and more wonderful than I imagined."

I have been rereading C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* recently.

In *Prince Caspian* one of the main characters Lucy encounters Aslan again.

And Aslan is the God/Christ figure in this allegorical story.

And Lucy met Aslan in the previous book.

But when Lucy sees Aslan again he has grown much larger.

"Aslan" said Lucy "you're bigger".

"That is because you are older, little one" answered he.

"Not because you are?"

"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."

Just like Lucy, Mary has found that God has grown bigger.

Every year we grow as Christians we should find God bigger and bigger.

Does God seem larger to you?

Does God continue to grow in your mind and heart?

Or does He seem the same to you?

Because like Mary our souls should magnify the Lord.

Her magnification of God leads her to rejoicing.

**"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."**

The more amazing God appears to you, then more you should want to rejoice and praise Him.

And Mary gives a few reasons for her rejoicing.  
They all are personally reasons she has to praise God.

First in verse 48 **"For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant."**

God has decided to pay attention to the poor nobody from Nazareth.  
She cannot believe that of all the people in the world,  
God sees her and notices her.  
And God has decided to bless and elevate her.

**"For behold, from now all generations will call me blessed."**

Which we still do.  
Even if you don't call her "the blessed virgin Mary."  
Every Christian should realize how blessed Mary was to be chosen by God  
to bring Jesus into this world.

If you were God who would you pick?  
I would want to pick the most qualified and righteous.  
Probably someone wealthy and significant.  
But God chooses a humble young woman from a small town.

Verse 49 **"For He who is might has done great things for me."**

He surely has.  
The mighty God has done incredible things for Mary.

With all of the might in the universe.  
The God with the power to shatter nations and empires.  
The God who commands storms.  
The God who defeats sea monsters like the Leviathan  
The God who created black holes, stars, and galaxies with a word.

That God.

He decides to use some of His power to intervene in Mary's life.

He does mighty things not just for all those people in the stories, but for her.

God uses His power and does things for the weak and unnoticed.

The stories in the Bible are not stories of God showing up for the greatest.

Most of the time God shows up miraculously for nobodies.

**"And Holy is His name."**

This is part of the wonder of God.

He is holy.

**"And His mercy is for those who fear Him, from generation to generation."**

That same mercy Mary received is available to you.

His mercies are new ever morning.

And anyone who fears God.

Anyone who worships Him

His mercy and power are available to you.

**"From generation to generation."**

That means it never runs out.

There have been a few generations between us and Mary.

There may be many more generations before Christ returns in power.

But for every single generation.

For our children back in the nursery.

And for their children and grandchildren.

God's mercy is still available.

So do not believe that God has overlooked you.

Our God intentionally looks at the overlooked.

Mary knows this.

Mary recognizes the grace she has been shown.  
And it makes her want to rejoice.  
This should lead us to rejoice.

### **Rejoice for how God has blessed you.**

This does not mean rejoice once you have received the blessing.  
Absolutely do that.  
When someone gives you a present you say thank you right then.  
But for Christians rejoicing should not be a one time event.  
Rejoicing should be a habit.

We should continue to rejoice.  
This is why Mary sings this song.  
Do you think this is the only time she repeats this?  
She said it once and then forget about it?  
No!

She repeated it enough for Luke to hear it years later.  
I don't know for sure, but I doubt she ever forgot it.  
Maybe she sang it as she rocked her Savior to sleep.  
We don't know, but we know that she made rejoicing a habit.

Because habitual rejoicing is an antidote against forgetfulness.  
Israel was always forgetting God's miracles.  
Even after the plagues in Egypt,  
After the Red Sea and the Mana,  
They still forgot God.

And we forget God too.  
Yet I think we often do something similar.  
I think that we continually forget about all that God has worked for us.  
We forget about all the answered prayers we have received from God  
once the next one is ignored.

We get knocked out by challenges and trials and forget the ones God has delivered us from.

One way for us to combat forgetfulness is through habitual rejoicing. It is by reminding ourselves of the stories of God's faithfulness. By rejoicing in what we have seen God do in our lives.

We could do this a number of ways. We could go back through our lives and remember all of the miracles we have seen. All the bills God paid for us when we didn't know how we could make it. All the tests He helped us pass. All of the sickness He guided us through.

If you have walked with God for long, then you already have story after story God doing mighty things for you. Don't forget them. Rejoice!

**[transition]** We rejoice for what God has done for us. We also should rejoice for what He does in His kingdom.

The second reason we rejoice is **Rejoice for the upside-down kingdom. Rejoice for the upside-down kingdom.**

We rejoice because the Kingdom of Jesus is incredible. It is beyond our wildest dreams. The reality of its appearance should lead to our rejoicing.

These next few verses are strange. They all are in the past tense. They seem to be talking about these God has done in the past.

But they are actually prophetic words about the future.

These are realities and things that God will do in His kingdom.  
But Mary talks about them in the past tense.

Why?

Because God is so trustworthy  
When He says He will do something  
You can speak about it in the past tense.

Because it is not some event in the future that may or may not happen.  
It has already been accomplished.  
You just have not seen it yet.

So Mary rejoices for the things God will do as if He has already done them.  
They are checks you can go ahead and cash.  
This kingdom is upside down because it reverses things.  
God does things opposite of the world.

God shows off His power in verse 51

**"He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;"**

The reference to God's arm is poetic language.  
It is talking about God's miracles as if they are God flexing His biceps.

God uses all of His power to destroy the prideful.  
Those who believe that they are in control of the world.  
Who believe that they are kings and gods.  
Those God scatters.

Like Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel.  
A king who believed his own hype.  
And God gave him madness so that he wandered and lived outside like an animal.

Pharaoh was proud, and God brought all of Egypt down to its knees.

Verse 52, **"he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;"**

You see the kingdom of God is upside down.

In Jesus Kingdom the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

The mighty lose their thrones.

Not to their rivals or other nations.

They lose them to the poor and humble.

King Jesus was not born to an important family, but ordinary people.

Jesus' disciples were not the religious elite or powerful.

He called tax collectors and fishermen.

Blue collar workers and the overlooked.

God chooses the weak things of the world to shame the wise.

I learned this lesson about the upside down nature of the kingdom as a child.

The church I grew up in was building a new building.

And one day they were pouring concrete and there was a number of children around watching.

The construction workers invited all of us kids to come and they would let us put our hands in some concrete.

And we would get to take the piece of concrete home with us after it dried.

So we quickly formed a line with everyone fighting for a good spot.

I found my way in the back of the line.

Not because I was so humble,

But because I was slow, weak, and shy.

After the line was formed the workers told us that Jesus said the first shall be last.

So they reversed the line and I got to put my hand in wet concrete first.  
That hand print sat in my dad's office for a long time.  
I don't know what ever happened to it,  
But I never forgot it.

God brings down the mighty and exalts the humble.

We also need to remember Mary's context when she said this.  
Israel is conquered and being ruled by the Romans.  
They have longed for a king who will come and set them free.  
Who will overthrow the emperor and cast down the mighty.  
A King who will destroy the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

But the kingdom of Jesus is upside-down.  
He does not defeat the Roman empire with a mightier army.  
He does not conquer with human might.  
Instead Jesus uses the weak and humble.

This has implications for us as we live in God's kingdom.  
We shouldn't want kings like the world.  
Our leaders are the humble not the proud.

Our culture place has the highest value on those who have the most  
power.  
Our celebrity culture values those who have fame and influence.  
The dream of most youth it's to be famous or to be someone.  
But the kingdom of God is not for famous somebody's.  
The kingdom of God is upside down.

In the kingdom of God the somebody's are nobody  
And the nobodies are somebody.

Verse 53, **"he has filled the hungry with good things.**

**and the rich he has sent away empty."**

Here we see God's preferential treatment for the poor.  
In the upside down kingdom the poor are fed  
While the rich go away hungry.

Jesus was born to a poor woman, not a rich one.  
Jesus lived as a poor man who depended on others,  
Instead of as a rich king.

In the upside down kingdom of God,  
Those in poverty,  
The beggars,  
The desperate,  
The hungry,  
They are valued.  
And they will be fed with all good things.

The people who would get turned away and ignored, Jesus says come.  
The kingdom of God will not be run by those with money.  
It will not be controlled by the powerful and wealthy.  
They will go away with nothing.  
While the poor get good things.

When we reflect on the nature of the upside down kingdom it should  
make us pause.  
Too often we talk about the culture as if it is something outside of us and  
not something that all of us participate in.  
Whether you like it or not you are both shaped by the culture and you  
helped shape the culture.  
It is the air that all of us breathe and none of us can escape it even if you  
don't like it.

And what this means is that far too often are visions of the kingdom of God are shaped by the culture's values.  
They are shaped by the cultures priorities.

And we do this when we evaluate success based on the world's metrics.  
When we say that successful churches are those that are the biggest or the most excellent, or that have the greatest standing in their community.  
Instead of by the way that God does it,  
instead of looking for those who are faithful.

Because of the upside down kingdom the small Church those faithful to the Lord and yet dies,  
is more important than the one that looks big and proud and yet is full of sin.

We only want to hear from pastors who have the most talent and charisma.  
We want to hear from the pastors who have the biggest churches.  
But there are plenty of faithful pastors who have served an unknown places who will be elevated in the kingdom of God.

Back in the kingdom of God and it's not about those who lead every way in charge those who serve.  
Jesus returns we will see either the greatest Christians are all unknown Ordinary People.  
Because the kingdom of God is upside down.  
And you will never properly understand his kingdom if you were using the worlds values.

But the kingdom of God turns those things upside down.  
And examining and rejoicing over the upside-down kingdom should help us see how often we get it wrong.  
All of us would rather be mighty proud and Rich,  
then weak, poor and a nobody.

So if looking at your life, examining your gifts, or your station makes you feel like you do not have much value in this world, Rejoice because God's kingdom is upside down.

**[transition]** The last reason we rejoice.

**We rejoice for God is faithful. Rejoice for God is faithful.**

God was  
and is  
And will be faithful.

**"He has helped His servant Israel."**

How many times has God been faithful to Israel?  
More times than we can count.

He was faithful to Noah, when he kept his family safe during the flood.  
He was faithful to give Abraham children even when he and Sarah were too old.

He was faithful to Hagar, and protected her when she was abandoned.  
He was faithful to Isaac when people would steal his wells.  
He was faithful to Jacob,  
even when his own family wanted to harm him and wrong him.

He was faithful to Joseph,  
even when he was sold into slavery and locked in prison.  
He was faithful when He delivered baby Moses from the river to safe.  
He was faithful when He delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt.  
He was faithful when He let Israel walk on dry land through the Red Sea.  
He was faithful when He rained down food from heaven and made water burst from rocks in the wilderness.  
He was faithful when they wandered as refugees and the Canaanites and Amorites tried to destroy them.  
He was faithful when He gave them the promised land.

He was faithful when He sent prophet after prophet to guide them.  
He was faithful to Daniel in the lions den.  
He was faithful to Jonah in the belly of a whale.  
He was faithful to Elijah and brought down fire from heaven.  
He was faithful when He saved a remnant even in exile.  
He was faithful when He brought them back to their land again.  
He was faithful time and time again even when they were faithless.

**He has helped his servant Israel,**  
**in remembrance of his mercy,**

God did these time and time again.  
I have only scratched the surface of all the times God has been faithful to His people.

Every single page of your Bible.  
I don't know how many pages your is.  
Mine is large print, but it's 1,875 pages long.  
That is 1,875 pages describing the faithfulness of God.  
There is not a moment or a page where He was unfaithful.

These are just the times we know about.  
How many miracles and wonders,  
How many small acts of God's faithfulness have His people seen through each generation that were never recorded.

Why?

**"in remembrance of His mercy."**

He did so because He is merciful.  
He was faithful even when they did not deserve it.  
Even when any one of us would have done away with Israel and tried again with a new people.  
But God was merciful.

This is just who God is.

Verse 55 reminds us of other instances of God's faithfulness.

**"as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

God has made many promises.

He made promises to individuals like Abraham.

He made promises to the nation of Israel.

He made promises to anyone who follows Him.

And we can read all of these promises because they are recorded for us.

But we need to remember that many of these promises were spoken first.

Abraham audibly heard the voice of God speak to him.

The prophets often heard God's voice.

Moses spoke to God face to face in a cloud of glory.

Isaiah beheld the throne.

Ezekiel saw wheels and angels.

They heard and saw,

We read.

But every single one of those promises.

God has kept.

And God will continue to keep.

Because God is faithful to His promises.

Sometimes we forget the promises that we make.

Many times my sons have asked me for the last bite of my sandwich or cookie.

And I promise them that they can have a bite after they finish their own dinner.

And the time will come and they come to my plate to eat,

And I have to apologize because I forget my promise and already ate it myself.

But God is not a forgetful father.  
God remembers all the promises

He remembers all of the promises that He made.  
He remembers the promise made to all of our ancestors in the faith.

The promise to Eve that her seed will crush the Serpent's head.  
The promises made to Abraham.  
The promise for a land no one would ever take away.  
The promise for children more numerous than the stars.  
The promise that through him all people on earth would be blessed.  
The promise to David that his line would rule forever.

And all of those promises are kept with the birth of Jesus.  
Jesus comes as the king who was promised.  
The King who will keep every promise God has ever made.

Verse 56 **"And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home."**

What a time Mary and Elizabeth must have had.

This is why we should rejoice.  
Because our God has always been faithful.  
The God who has kept all of those promises will keep His promises to you.

Promises to never leave you nor forsake you.  
The promise that all who confess their sins and believe in Jesus will be saved.  
The promise that we can take His yoke on our shoulders and find rest.  
The promise that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard our hearts and minds.  
The promise that God will draw near to those who draw near to Him.  
The promise that God will hear our prayers.  
The promise that He gives good gifts to His children.

The promise that God will wash us clean when we stand before the throne.  
The promise that He will provide a way out of temptation.  
The promise that God works all things together for good for those who love Him.  
The promise that Jesus will return.  
The promise that sin and death will be banished forever.  
The promise of resurrection for those who trust in Jesus.

All of those promises are yes and amen.  
I thought that was a silly song.  
Until I was rebuked by Scripture.

1 Corinthians **"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."**

All the promises of God are yes and amen through Christ.

Christian, our God has always kept His promises.  
He has not failed on a single one.  
He will not begin to do so now.  
We can trust that God will do these things again.

To your last breath God will be faithful.  
He has been faithful for every second that time has existed.  
And He will be faithful in every single moment that passes.  
Let us rejoice.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Three reasons to rejoice. Rejoice for how God has blessed you. Rejoice for the upside-down kingdom. Rejoice for God is faithful.
2. [Challenge] I don't know about you, but I am ready to rejoice.