

A. Introduction

1. There are radio stations in Toronto (probably TV stations, too) whose programming consists of popular musical entertainment
  - a. they play on a non-stop basis the top 50 (or whatever) currently most popular songs based on sales, etc.
  - b. or it may be the “Golden Oldies”
  - c. or perhaps, the greatest classical pieces as on CFMX
  - d. well, today, we have just read what well may be one of the 10 greatest hymns of praise of all time
2. this hymn is commonly called the “Magnificat” because that is the first word of Mary’s song as translated into the Vulgate 405AD (Latin) Bible by Jerome
  - a. One writer has said, “Divine speech is articulation of God’s presence. ... The Magnificat is a biblical theology in miniature, because it begins and it ends in an exaltation not of Mary but of the Word.” —<sup>{2}</sup>.
  - b. now that’s interesting, because we commonly think of it being the Jewish boys that were trained up in the Law — B’nai Berith; sons of the covenant — but, here is Mary, a small-town girl, expressing great theological truth; composing, on the spot, a great hymn of praise
  - c. and included in this hymn are found many references to the Old Testament Psalms and Prophets
  - d. remember also, as was pointed out last week, in the angel Gabriel’s message: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you...” (Luke 1: 35, NIV) ... Mary was inspired with the living Word of God and then here with a song of praise to God, that could well be included with Psalms

B. The Purpose of this Hymn is to Praise God

1. look at Luke 1:46, as rendered in the various translations:
  - a. NKJV: “My soul magnifies the Lord” (most literal)
  - b. NAS: “My soul exalts the Lord”
  - c. NIV: “My soul glorifies the Lord”

2. we pointed out a few weeks ago, that English words ending in “-fy” mean to make something: such as solidify, to make solid; clarify, to make clear; and so on
  - a. “magnify” is literally to make great or large and “glorify” is literally to make glorious
  - b. yet with God, we cannot make Him any greater or glorious than He already is; so that in this context, this comes to mean acknowledging, telling, and witnessing to the greatness and the glory of God
3. how does Mary give this witness in the hymn of praise?
  - a. with her soul
  - b. in God’s word, a person’s soul
    - (A) is one’s innermost being
    - (B) it is the real you, not what others see
    - (C) it is you as God sees you; the Lord who
      - (1) looks upon the heart, 1 Samuel 16:7
      - (2) understands my thought afar off, Psalm 139:2
    - (D) so Mary is expressing her deepest inward thoughts
  - c. but, in the Hebrew use and in Jewish thought
    - (A) the word for soul, goes beyond one’s inner thoughts
    - (B) meaning one’s very life, one’s very existence
    - (C) so Mary is saying her very life is praising God
  - d. let’s “single” out just two themes of praise in Mary’s hymn: God’s Mercy and God’s Salvation

### C. Praise for God’s Mercy

1. the very central core and content of Mary’s hymn
  - a. is that God is a merciful God
  - b. and this is to be found in the middle on the hymn as she quotes from Psalm 103:17 (NAS): [“But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children,”](#)
  - c. “lovingkindness” (or “mercy” in the KJV; “unfailing or everlasting love” in other translations) is that beautiful Hebrew word, “hesedh,” which describes the gracious acts and attitude of God towards His children

- d. Mary's hymn, from start to finish, reflects this: God's act towards her is totally undeserved and unearned
- (A) she is but of a very humble state; of no fame or repute
  - (B) she is but a maidservant, female bond-slave, verse 48
  - (C) she who is humble has been exalted, verse 52
  - (D) she has been filled with good things, verse 53
  - (E) in her, God in His mercy, has remembered His promise to Abraham, sending help to His people Israel

2. Now just a few things to note about this mercy given to Mary

- a. God's mercy is persistent; Luke 1:50 (NAS) says, "His mercy is upon generation after generation" this was not just for Mary, nor even the people of her time, but for people of all time from that date forward — for us here today
- b. Luke 1:52–53 tells us that God's mercy is for the humble rather than the self-sufficient: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty."
  - (A) Once there was a poor woman who greatly desired a bunch of grapes from the King's conservatory for her sick child. She took half a crown and went to the king's gardener, seeking to buy the grapes, but was refused. Again she tried, again was refused. But the princess, hearing her weeping, enquired of her what was the matter. Upon being told, she said, "Dear woman, you are mistaken. My father is not a merchant, but a king. His business is not to sell, but to give. Here, takes this bunch." So the woman obtained as a free gift what many days effort had been unable to buy. <sup>—{3}</sup>.
  - (B) God's mercy is not to be purchased, but accepted as a gift: Ephesians 2:8–9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
- c. bringing us to another theme of Mary's hymn, salvation

D. Praise for God's Salvation

- 1. there are many aspects of this theme at which we could look

- a. salvation as embodied in Mary's Son-to-be as Saviour
  - b. salvation as the redemption of God's people, Israel
  - c. but for now, will you just consider these two:
2. Salvation is personal, Luke 1:47 (NKJV): "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour."
- a. it is not
    - (A) God, my nations's Saviour
    - (B) or, God, my parent's Saviour
    - (C) or, God, my friend's Saviour
    - (D) but God MY Saviour
  - b. salvation is the restoration, on a one by one basis, of an individual into the God-intended relationship with Himself
  - c. John 1:12 (NAS): But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
  - d. how do you stand in relationship with God this morning? in that regard, you have a responsibility
3. Salvation has a condition: God in showing mercy, places upon the individual a responsibility; look at Luke 1:50 (NKJV): "And His mercy is on those who fear Him ..." ... those who fear Him
- a. we can but touch briefly on what fearing God means
    - (A) a repeated theme throughout Proverbs; where we find
      - (1) it is the way to know God (2:5)
      - (2) it is related to repentance, turning from evil (3:7)
      - (3) it is based on humility, turning from pride (8:13)
      - (4) it is the beginning of wisdom (1:7, 9:10)
      - (5) it leads to life (14:27, 19:23, 22:4)
    - (B) while there is no explicit definition of "fearing God," Proverbs 3:5–6 gives a practical one: Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct thy paths.
  - b. in coming to God for salvation, the vehicle is trust; the conduit is faith; as we just read from Ephesians 2:8-10

## E. Conclusion

1. Mary's hymn of praise shows that she knew is a personal way the salvation that comes alone from the God of mercy
2. she did so without knowing about the cross upon which her Son would one day die for the sin of the world
3. but we here today know that salvation comes by the way of the cross and the finished work of Jesus Christ; if you have not already done so, oh put your faith in Him today and gain for yourself reality as you sing our closing hymn, "One Day"

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by "Holwick" followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. Samuel Terrien in The Magnificat: Musicians as Biblical Interpreters – Holwick illustration #4236
3. Biblical Museum, *sub* Luke 1:46–48, “Giving and selling”