

INTRODUCTION

One of my all-time favorite movies is the “Sound of Music.” I love the way it starts with Julie Andrews standing on a beautiful mountain with her arms stretched out, twirling around as she sings “The hills are alive with the sound of music ...” She is playing the part of a woman who is so full of joy and happiness that she can’t restrain the music that is in her heart. It’s hard to watch that first scene without smiling.

Today, we are going to look at two other women whose hearts are so full that they can’t help but sing. That’s the title of this message: When Your Heart is Full, You Can’t Help But Sing! Luke must have loved music because we are going to hear the songs of Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah and Simeon in the first two chapters.

The great Bible teacher, G. Campbell Morgan, writes: “Luke, the artist, has gathered and collected, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the stories which reveal the fact that when Jesus came into the world poetry expressed itself and music was reborn.” Luke also was determined to show us the important role of women in God’s plan. Women have always played a very important role in God’s plan. Jesus Christ came to truly honor and liberate women. In the Jewish culture, women were only slightly more valuable than possessions. Every morning many devout Jewish men would recite this prayer: “I thank you God that I was not born a Gentile, a woman, or a dog.” Remember, Dr. Luke is not Jewish – he is Greek. He is the gospel writer who gives us more stories about the key role of women in the ministry of Jesus and the other three gospel writers. These are the first of many women who are highlighted in this wonderful book.

As I have mentioned previously, Dr. Luke is fascinated with the way the birth of John the Baptist is interwoven with the birth of Jesus Christ. In the passage we will examine today, we see the two mothers coming together for a visit. Remember, last week we heard the angel Gabriel tell young Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, was expecting a child. These words were a surprise to Mary, because Elizabeth was old and was thought to be unable to have children. Let’s pick up with the story beginning in verse 39. “At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!’” First, we will notice:

I. ELIZABETH’S INSPIRED ADMIRATION (vs. 39-45)

By studying the statements about time we can infer that Mary left almost immediately after Gabriel’s visit. Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Gabriel visited Mary. Verse 56 tells us that Mary stayed for three months. Notice the scripture says that Mary, “got ready and hurried.” There were probably several good reasons why Mary chose to visit Elizabeth. She was there to check out Gabriel’s statement. But, as we will see later, she was probably also very anxious to get away from Nazareth. We can safely assume this was an unannounced, surprise

visit. How? Verse 40 tells us that Mary entered Elizabeth's house before she greeted her. We know from studying the social customs of the times that the rules of hospitality were clearly established. If someone knew a guest was coming, it was the job of the host or hostess to wait outside the house and be the first to greet their guest. Only after this initial greeting would the guest be invited into the house. Mary surprised Elizabeth because it says that she entered the house before she greeted her. Now most women don't like to have unannounced company but in this case Elizabeth was overjoyed! Elizabeth responds to Mary's visit with a spontaneous song of admiration. I deeply admire Elizabeth, and in many ways, each of us should imitate her faith and practice. Let's look at four ways that we should be like her:

Like Elizabeth, we should be filled with:

1. The Holy Spirit

Again, Dr. Luke has more to say about the Holy Spirit than the other gospel writers. He also penned the book of Acts, which can best be called the "Acts of the Holy Spirit." Gabriel had told Zechariah that their son would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. How was that possible? It's because his mother was filled with the Holy Spirit. Moms and dads, your spiritual condition will go a long way to determine the level of spiritual depth of your children.

In Ephesians 5:18, we are commanded "Don't be drunk on wine, which leads to dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." As I have said many times before, when you are saved, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit but that is not the same as being *filled* with the Holy Spirit. When a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit, that person is under the control of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul compares and contrasts it with being drunk with wine. When a person is drunk, they are under the influence of that toxin. That's bad. When a Christian is filled with the Spirit, they are under the influence of the God's Spirit and that's good. Being drunk affects the way a person thinks, walks, acts, and talks. When you are filled with the Spirit, it, too, affects the way you think, act, and speak. The words that Elizabeth speaks are not her own, she is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

As a Christian, it is our job to be filled and to stay filled with God's Holy Spirit. It is not some freaky experience that makes you act weird. It is a continual surrender that makes you act normal. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit it produces certain attitudes and actions. We see them in Elizabeth, too. Next, we see that she was filled with:

2. Joy and enthusiasm

There are two indications that let us know Elizabeth was ecstatic. First, in verse 44 she shares that her unborn baby was leaping for joy in her womb. That had to cause her great joy as well. I can remember when Cindy was pregnant she would often say, "Put your hand here on my tummy and feel this." It's hard to describe the joy and thrill that both of us would feel to know that there was a little person in there moving around. Cindy often said, "Jenni didn't just kick, she was dancing; hard to believe that she was going to be a Baptist!" Well, this first Baptist baby was jumping for joy. What a jolt of joy Elizabeth must have experienced when she heard Mary's

voice and felt her unborn son leaping for joy! By the way, the abortion debate continues about when life begins. Here is an unborn child who not only is alive but seems to be very aware!

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan writes: “To me this is very suggestive that as the Holy Seed within the womb of Mary approached the unborn herald, there was a spiritual consciousness; the babe leapt in her womb for joy. I am not going to debate it, but I often bend over a crib where a baby lies, and watch those baby eyes looking into mine, and wonder how much that child knows.”

Verse 42 says that Elizabeth exclaimed with a loud voice – she was full of joy and excitement. According to Galatians 5:22, joy is the second fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy shouldn’t be something that you have to dredge up from your gloomy spirit. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, He will produce the beautiful fruit of joy in your personality. One way to can spot a person who is not filled with the Holy Spirit, there will be no joy in their life.

I think joy and enthusiasm are Siamese twins. Joy is what you experience personally, enthusiasm is how to express that joy to others. Our English word enthusiasm is comprised of two Greek words “en” meaning “in” and “theos” meaning “God.” The more “in God” you are, the more enthusiastic you will be! I think joy is the birthright of every true believer. It is part of our spiritual heritage. Satan is a thief and a liar; he knows he can’t rob you of your salvation so he tries to rob you of the joy of your salvation. That’s why David prayed in Psalm 51:12, “Restore unto me the *joy* of my salvation.” Have you lost the joy of your salvation?

3. Spiritual insight

When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, not only will there be joy, but there will also be the revelation of spiritual truth. Jesus promised that when He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us that He would, “guide you into all truth.”(John 16:13) Elizabeth makes some amazing observations that would not have been possible if she had not been filled with the Holy Spirit. First, she knows by divine revelation that Mary is going to have a child; she acknowledges this before Mary can tell her about Gabriel’s visit.

Second, she recognizes that Mary’s child would not be just any child. In verse 43, she asks the amazing question, “But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” It’s a part of a mother’s instinct to be protective and proud of her own children. You would have thought Elizabeth would have recited all the great things that Gabriel had predicted about her child, John. But she is not jealous at all. Most of us parents prefer to brag about how great our own children are but not Elizabeth. The filling of the Holy Spirit also produces true humility.

Notice what Elizabeth says about Mary’s unborn child. She calls him “my Lord.” As far as we know, Elizabeth is the only person to confess “Jesus is my Lord” while He was still unborn! What incredible spiritual insight she must have had to be able to recognize that this little boy would be her Lord and the Lord of everyone else. The Bible says that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11) Elizabeth proclaimed it first – but she won’t be the last!

4. Encouragement

Notice the final inspired thing that Elizabeth says to Mary in verse 45. She calls her “blessed” because she was believing the Lord. Remember, Mary is an unmarried teenager facing a pregnancy out of wedlock. She had to be confused, scared, and a little uncertain about all of this. What an encouragement it must have been to hear Elizabeth greet her by confirming what Gabriel had told her. Elizabeth was saying, “Mary, you are *so* blessed!” In verse 42 Elizabeth says, “You are blessed among women!” Contrary to much Catholic doctrine, she didn’t say, “you are blessed *above* women.” Then Elizabeth observes that the child in her womb was blessed as well.

Many of you have heard of what our Catholic friends call a “Hail Mary.” It’s more than just a last second pass before the end of a football game. That phrase is taken from what Gabriel said in verse 28 (the KJV says “hail Mary”) and what Elizabeth says in verse 42. Good Catholics repeat many “Hail Mary’s.” They recite, “Hail, Mary, full of grace, blessed art thou, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” That’s nice, but Elizabeth wasn’t praying to Mary, she was encouraging her, telling her how blessed she was!

The Bible says in Hebrews 10:25 that one of the reasons we are to gather together for worship is to “encourage one another.” When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, like Elizabeth, you won’t be focusing on “getting a blessing.” You will be focused primarily on “being a blessing” to others! Like the old song “Home, Home on the Range,” church should be a place “where seldom is heard a discouraging word.” But the sad thing is for many people, they leave church saying, “where seldom is heard an encouraging word.” Our job as Christians is to encourage others, to make sure they leave church being “built up” in the faith.

Now, we are commanded to be filled with the same Holy Spirit who filled Elizabeth 2,000 years ago. How can you tell when you are filled? You will be expressing joy and enthusiasm. You will have unusual spiritual insight into God’s truth, and you will be a supernatural encouragement to others!

Now let’s look at Mary’s response. Start reading in verse 46. 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. He has preformed 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, even as he said to our fathers.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home. (Luke 1:46-56) We can call this section:

II. MARY’S INSPIRED ADORATION (vs. 46-56)

How do we know this is a song? In the Greek text, it is arranged into lyrics just like the Psalms of the Old Testament. It has been called the “Magnificat” because that is the Latin translation of the first word in her song. Mary is so steeped in Scripture that when she breaks out in praise the words that come naturally to her lips are the words of Scripture. Being a young woman, she probably loved the stories of the Old Testament women of faith like Sarah, Deborah, Hannah, Ruth, and Abigail. What an admonition to us all to steep our minds and hearts in the Scriptures day and night so that the words and thoughts of Scripture fill our mouths as naturally as they did Mary’s. You can’t help but notice that Mary’s Song reads like one of the Psalms. In fact, she quotes five of the biblical psalms in her song. This reveals to us that Mary was a woman who was so saturated in the Word of God that her spontaneous song is filled with scripture. We don’t know the tune of her song, but it was probably a sing-song kind of chant that was popular among Jewish people at that time. As we examine this beautiful song of Mary, we can learn a great deal about worship.

From Mary, we discover the proper:

1. Setting of worship – anytime and anyplace – even when we are troubled

Notice Mary’s location when she uttered this song of praise. She was in Elizabeth’s little home. Sometimes people think the only place to worship is the church and the only time to worship is on Sunday. Anytime and anyplace is proper setting for worship. You can worship God wherever and whenever you decide to free up your spirit to do so.

I submit to you that a great time to worship God is when you face troubling circumstances in your life. It’s easy to worship God when everything is going great for you, but what about when your life seems to be falling apart? When your life is pain-free, worship is a luxury but worship is a necessity when you are struggling. That is, when your heart is full of pain you need to sing praises.

I believe Mary was very troubled at the time she expressed this beautiful song of worship. Ladies, put yourselves in her sandals for a moment. When you are married and discover you are expecting, the first thing you want to do after you hear from the doc is tell someone!....call family....call friends.... On the other hand, an unmarried girl who discovers she is pregnant has a totally different reaction. Well, Mary now knew she was pregnant not with just any child but with the Messiah – God Himself was in her womb! She couldn’t tell her parents or Joseph – not just yet – so these were confusing days for her. Sadly, today, there are many thousands of unwed teenage pregnancies. The statistics are staggering as we move toward the place where half of the babies born in America are born to single mothers. But in the time of Mary this was extremely rare. There was a heavy moral and social stigma attached to this condition. Mary could have been accused of adultery and the sentence for that was stoning. You may think her pregnancy was “no big deal” – but it was.

We can surmise from reading something that Matthew tells us that Mary’s pregnancy was a terrible scandal, which could have escalated into something ugly. Look at Matthew 1:19. We are told that when it was discovered Mary was expecting a child, “Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her

quietly.” Now, we know an angel visited Joseph and explained the situation to him, so he did marry Mary. But look at those two words “PUBLIC DISGRACE.” Mary knew there was the possibility that she would become a social outcast because of her condition. Can’t you see her as she throws a few pieces of clothing into a bag and hurries away from her hometown to travel three days south to reach Elizabeth’s home? Every step she took, she thought of the words of Gabriel. She had to have been perplexed and confused about it all. I believe this expression of praise was her way of totally surrendering herself to God’s plan. Some of you came here today with tough problems and struggles. Don’t let your pain keep you from worshiping God. This is the very time you must worship. There’s a great line from a song that the choir often sings that says, “For the chains that seem to bind you, serve only to remind you, that they drop powerless behind you when you praise Him.”

We can also learn something about the

2. Attitude of worship – humility – an inner impression of personal blessing

True worship begins on the inside of your heart and works its way out. Mary starts by saying, “My soul glorifies the Lord – my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Your soul and your spirit comprise what the scripture calls you “inner person.” It is the personality that inhabits your body. That’s where worship starts.

John McArthur writes:

Worship comes up from inside. It bubbles up and bubbles over, as the New Testament word describes it. It is not coming to church. It is not singing a hymn alone. It is not reading words in a Bible, hearing a sermon. It is not just giving something in the offering. It is not carrying out a ritual, even the Lord’s table. Those are potential effects of a worshiping heart, but they cannot stand alone as true worship. It is the inner heart of adoring praise that is the essence of true worship. It is when the soul and the spirit are overwhelmed. It could be called “worship from the heart.” It must break the heart of God, and it ought to break our hearts that so often a crowd gathers in the name of Jesus – but only superficial, shallow worship occurs. It’s like what God said through Isaiah in Is. 29:13 “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” That could describe thousands of churchgoers every Sunday morning who stand up and sing the words to songs of praise – but their hearts are cold and dead.

Mary shows us that a humble heart is the kind of heart that produces worship. In verse 48 she confesses that she is God’s “humble servant.” In verse 52, she observes that God “has lifted up the humble.” When she says, “My soul glorifies the Lord,” she uses a word that is very interesting. It is the word *megaluno*. It literally means, “to make larger.” She is saying, “my soul is making the Lord bigger and bigger in His position of honor in my life.” The smaller your ego becomes, the larger the Lord can become in your life. True worship sees yourself as more and more insignificant and God as being greater, stronger, and more awesome. It’s the spirit of humility that John the Baptist would exhibit 30 years later when he said this about Jesus, “He

must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30). That’s a great principle about the attitude of worship. We get smaller; God gets larger in our hearts.

But then, this inner expression results in an expression of joy, Mary sings, “my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” The word used is one that means to be overjoyed, to be overcome with unspeakable joy. It even is referred in some instances as an out loud kind of joy, an exuberant kind of joy that is unconstrained. Worship begins with a humble recognition of who we are in comparison to God’s greatness. Then, we move on to the:

3. Object of worship – a holy God who saves – an outward expression of God’s greatness

We’ve seen the setting for worship and the correct attitude for worship, now we see the most important element of worship: the object of our worship. Everybody on this planet worships. The difference is *who* or *what* do you worship? Mary’s song of praise is focused only on God and His wonderful character. You see worship begins on the inside with a humble recognition that God is great. But true worship always comes out from the heart through the lips to become an outward expression of praise. Most often it is a verbal expression. Mary sang it. Sometimes it may be a written expression. For our friends who can’t hear or speak, it is a visible expression through sign language. But the main point is that inner appreciation always expresses itself in outward adoration. In other words, your praise will be communicated in a way that others can understand it and be blessed by it.

Notice the things she says about God. (1) He is called her Savior in verse 47. Those that claim Mary was sinless all her life have a hard time explaining how she would *need* a Savior but she needed a Savior just like we do. (2) He is called the Mighty One in verse 48. (3) His name is Holy (vs. 49). (4) In verse 50, we see that He is merciful (5) He is stronger than all the kingdoms of men (vs. 51-52) (6) He fills the needy with good things (vs. 53) (7) In verses 54-55, He is the God who keeps His promises to Israel.

Mary is showing us that worship is all about God and His greatness, not about us. As we move into the 21st Century, a disagreement about worship styles has infiltrated many of our churches. The issue is the style of worship, which for most people means the style of music used in worship. Music is just one part of worship but it is an important part. Different generations prefer different worship styles, which usually means different music styles. We must come to realize that in worship *substance* is more important than *style*.

God doesn’t judge worship based on the style of the music; He judges it based on the heart of the worshiper. Jesus said the Father is seeking people who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. I can almost hear God saying, “Quit arguing over the kind of music you use and worship me!” A spirit-filled person is so focused on worshiping God they seldom notice the style. Elizabeth is a good example. I’m so glad that elderly Elizabeth didn’t scoff at the teenaged Mary by saying, “That’s okay, Mary, but I don’t care for your style of music ... after all, you are a teenager.”

In light of music styles, I need to say that our church employs what we call a blended style of music. That means that we sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and we are directed to in Ephesians 5:19. That means we will continue to sing scripture songs. Be careful that you don’t

criticize those lyrics because you are insulting the author: God Himself! We aren't going to stop singing the beautiful old hymns of the faith but neither will we omit singing the newer songs that committed Christians have written as praise choruses. I've told you before, but in the 18th century, new radical songs like “Blessed Be the Name” written by Charles Wesley were banned in respectable churches. Why? Because the chorus sounded too much like some popular drinking songs.

“Blessed be the name; blessed be the name; blessed be the name of the Lord ... ” Actually, on any given Sunday morning in America, you can find a wide variety of worship styles, even within Baptist churches. There are some churches that are focusing primarily on reaching “twenty-somethings.” They won't have choir, just a band. It will be loud and the people will stand and praise for thirty to forty-five minutes. (Remember, they are young). I enjoy that occasionally, but I wouldn't care for that week after week – but I'm not going to criticize them. If they are truly worshiping from their hearts, I believe for me to criticize them is to blaspheme God. Their music isn't designed to please me, it is directed toward God. Other churches are very formal and liturgical in their approach. I don't care for that either but if they are worshiping from their hearts, I say, “Keep it up!” Some rural churches have maintained they will only sing about the “old time religion.” I can only take so much “Stamps Baxter” gospel music, but I'm certainly not going to judge the hearts of those who sing it. I can't criticize it. God is the only qualified worship critic in the universe and the last time I checked, there wasn't a vacancy in the Trinity! I'm convinced that God receives and appreciates true worship, whatever the style, as long as it comes from a heart full of love.

The reason we employ a blended style is because we are a multi-generational church. We aren't targeting just the younger crowd or just the older crowd. We are targeting anyone who needs Jesus. We are an anomaly in many respects, because many of the “experts” say you can't grow a church using this blended style. I disagree.

Here's the point, folks. Don't focus on the worship style. Focus on God and His greatness. Say this, “Worship is all about honoring God, not about pleasing me.” Sometimes I hear a person make a statement like this (usually when they don't like something about the music): “I just don't get much out of worship anymore.” Whenever someone says that to me my honest response is: “Well you are focusing on the wrong thing. Worship isn't for you to get something, it is for you to give something, give praise and honor and obedience to God.” That's the difference between self-centered worship and God-centered worship. So young folks, when we sing a great old hymn like, “Joyful, Joyful, we adore Thee,” written over 100 years ago, don't you stand there and think “What an old song, it even has ‘thees and thous’ in it; why don't we sing something newer?” Shame on you. If you are thinking that, you aren't worshiping. Instead, don't focus on your personal preference, just focus on Jesus and sing away – adore Him! Why don't you just say, “This isn't the style I prefer, but there are lots of others here who like this style. I'm so grateful for the older folks in our church who have faithfully served, prayed and worked for the Lord and after all, worship isn't about me and my preferences; it's all about God.” Then, just join in singing that hymn with a heart that is full of praise for God. And when your heart is full you can't help but sing! That's what Mary did.

Older folks when we sing a new chorus like, “Praise you, praise you, let my life praise you ...” Don’t stand there and think, “I don’t like this as much as the old hymns. We are just singing the same words over and over.” Shame on you. If you are thinking that, you aren’t worshiping. Stop focusing on your personal preference and focus on God. Go ahead and tell yourself, “This isn’t my favorite style, but there are many here who like it. I’m so grateful we have all ages of people in our church. I’ve got to remember: Worship isn’t about me and my preferences; it’s all about God and His greatness.” Then join in and sing that song from your heart. Because when your heart is full you can’t help but sing! That’s what Mary did.

There’s one final thing we can discover from Mary’s song. We can learn about the:

4. Result of worship – kindness and mercy to others

Don’t miss verse 56. It could be called “What to do after you finish singing praise to God.” What do most people do after worship? Nothing. They just leave. Do you see what Mary did? “Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.” Now, you don’t have to be a genius to figure out *why* Mary stayed. She stayed to be of service to Elizabeth. Pregnancy is a tough experience (I’m told) even for younger women. You can only imagine that Elizabeth faced many physical challenges because of her pregnancy. I can just picture young Mary staying to help Elizabeth during the final trimester of her pregnancy, while at the same time dealing with the early weeks of her own pregnancy. To me, this is a beautiful picture of what happens after we have a powerful experience of worship. When we focus on the kindness and mercy of God, we become more like Him. The supernatural by-product of worship is a desire to show kindness to others. I think the only way you can “serve the Lord with gladness” is to let your service flow out of a heart that is full of worship and praise. So many people work hard for God, but they seldom truly worship. They almost think that their good deeds are a substitute for worship. They work, work, work for Jesus, but they seldom sit at His feet and just adore and praise Him.

Others come into church and have a powerful worship experience that may even bring tears to their eyes. They are moved and touched by God. But when they leave church, they forget all about it, and they don’t ever serve the Lord, they are just waiting for their next worship service. They worship, worship, worship, but they are never changed into productive Christian servants. Work without worship is pretense. Worship without work is presumption. But worship that leads to work is precious to God.

I always think about a man who wrote a book a few years ago exposing one of the high-profile tele-evangelists. He was part of the inner team, and he would accompany this “spirit-filled preacher” to restaurants after being in a three hour “Holy Ghost” meeting. He would observe, as this preacher would be overbearing, rude, and unkind to the server at their table. He said this glaring inconsistency was one of the things that opened his eyes to this man’s dirty heart. Whoa! And I’ve been told by servers that the churchgoers who leave church and go to restaurants for Sunday lunch are the worst tippers. True worship produces a spirit of service, kindness, and mercy. When you spend time with God, you become more like Him in His character.

We see the connection between praise and service in Hebrews 13:15-16. “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess his

name. (That's worship) And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (That's work).

Notice several important things about that passage. First, praise itself is a sacrifice. As I said earlier, when your life is going great, it's no great sacrifice to praise God. Praising God in the midst of agony and pain becomes more a sacrifice and it becomes more valuable to God. Also, do you see that praise becomes the "fruit of our lips?" To me, that means that an inner feeling of appreciation for God is not enough. Praise must be expressed with our lips so that it can be heard. When we confess, "Jesus is Lord," others hear it and are moved. Finally, real worship always results in doing good and sharing with others.

Have you ever had an experience of worship like Mary's? Have you ever fallen so deeply in love with God that your heart is bursting with praise? That's God plan for each of us.

CONCLUSION

One of my favorite poets of the nineteenth century is Christina Rossetti who lived from 1830 to 1894. Christina was the daughter of Italian immigrants, a woman of great beauty, it is said, striking beauty. A woman of immense poetic talent, a devout Christian once engaged to a Roman Catholic who promised to convert. When he had second thoughts, she broke the engagement and remained single all her life. Through that life she wrote some of the most magnificent poetry, all of it a tribute to Christ. She wrote this poem about the birth of Christ and every time I read her words I am moved:

"In the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed, for the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.
Angels and archangels may have gathered there, cherubim and seraphim fill the air; But
his mother only in her maiden bliss, worshiped the beloved with a kiss."

The poem concludes with these beautiful words:

"What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I'd give Him a lamb; If I were a wise man, I'd do my part. But what can I give Him? I'll give Him my heart."

You are in the presence of God. Is your heart full? Do you remember the first scene from "The Sound of Music"? We ought to walking out of here today singing, "My heart is alive with the joy of worship!"

OUTLINE

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3. Spiritual insight
4. Encouragement

II. MARY’S INSPIRED ADORATION (46-56)

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Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. *Matthew 1:19*
2. Attitude of worship – humility – an inner impression of personal gratitude
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Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. *Hebrews 13:15-16*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes