

Luke 1:46-80 – Praise God for his saving mercy in Jesus

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Main Point – Praise God for the Lord has come and rescued us, and will lift up the humble.

I wonder if you're longing for something?-----**(SLIDE)**

Maybe you were wanting something for Christmas, and *didn't get it?*-----

Or maybe you didn't receive *anything*?

Maybe you're feeling life hasn't delivered for you?-----

What are you longing for?-----

For friends, a partner; for better health, more wealth, or happiness?-----

Maybe *kids*, you're longing to win instead of lose, or for more stuff, or *maybe* for your family members to stop fighting?-----

What's maybe surprising or even shocking, is that the two people who praise God in this passage, had been longing for God's mercy and salvation, freedom and forgiveness.-----

And maybe we long for things that don't matter as much as *that*?-----

If you were here on Christmas Day, we heard how the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary **(SLIDE)** and said she'd give birth to the Son of God, the Lord *Jesus*.-----

Mary rushed off to tell her relative, Elizabeth.

Months *earlier* Gabriel had told Zechariah that he n' his wife *Elizabeth* would have a baby, *even in* their old age.

And their son would turn people back to God and prepare them for the Lord's coming. So both Elizabeth and Mary carry super-special children.

And now we see Mary and Zechariah, praising God for what matters most.-----

We'll look at some **similarities and differences****(SLIDE)** between their poetic speeches or songs, and see *how that matters* to us.

So thinking firstly about the Similarities, we see that both **begin with praise**.-----

And from **v46** we have Mary's song of praise.

Look at how she responds**(SLIDE)** – 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices* in God my Saviour'.

Famous words.

They're words that show Mary actually has the truths of Hannah's prayer from 1 Sam 2 *in her* heart.-----

To *magnify* the Lord, is to make God **great**, or rather declare God's greatness, tell everyone that the Lord is great.

As we'll do in our last song.-----

When you use a *magnifying* glass you make something bigger in your eyes**(SLIDE)**.

Mary wants God to know he is huge in her eyes.

And she wants everyone to know the Lord's greatness.

She praises God as 'the Mighty One', in **v49**. The holy, set apart great one.

And focuses not on what she has done, but on the great things God has done for her.

Further down she highlights the great things he's done for his people.-----

But as well as praising God for his *greatness*, she praises him for her salvation.

v47, she rejoices in God her **Saviour**.

The word 'rejoice' *literally* means greatly rejoice,**(SLIDE)** *jumping for joy*, or exceedingly glad.

She knows she needed a Saviour, and the Lord God is her Saviour.-----

Mary can't see the future, or all the details, but she knew that God was her Saviour and she rejoices.

She *sings*, and *why shouldn't we sing like* Mary?-----

For we know God has saved us through Jesus
 When did you last marvel at being accepted by God included in God's saved people?
 It's a mind-blowing reality.
 [As we heard in the kids talk, whether you want to a happy dance, sing joyfully, or
 praise and thank God in your prayers – if Jesus has saved you – rejoice!]

Mary also praises God for his **mercy, v50.**

Mercy, is not getting a consequence or punishment you deserve.
 God shows people *mercy* when he doesn't judge n' condemn people, anyone who turns
 to him with awe-filled trust.

He shows mercy to us because Jesus took our just judgement, to *save us* from hell.----
 We'll come back to that.-----

God's mercy is also there in **v54** – the Mighty God remembering his past *merciful*
promises made to his people.-----

When I was growing up **my Dad worked long hours**, 6 days a week, and worked on
 renovating our house on Sundays.

I longed to spend *time with* him.

And I came to know that when my Dad promised he'd take holidays and we'd have time
 together, camping as a family over summer, he'd keep that promise. **(SLIDE)**

And Summer holidays with my Dad, with him *even playing* a ball sports, were precious
 times & precious memories.-----

But even *better than that*, our Father God promises that he has done something to
 restore relationship with people, sending the Saviour to enable us to be with him.

And God always keeps his promises.-----

Mary praises God for his promise-keeping **faithfulness, v55.**

She knows that the birth of her son is somehow going to *fulfil* God's promise to bless
Abraham's descendants Israel n' *be their God* forever. **(SLIDE – Gen 12.1-3 & 17.7)**

God's people, receiving God's blessing, through God's Son.

Mary is standing at the *turning point* of all history.-----

And this is really what **Zechariah** speaks about too.-----

10 months earlier elderly Zech didn't believe he'd have a son.

Now his wife Elizabeth has given birth, and when he writes 'His name is John',

v64, (SLIDE) look at what happens:

'immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free and he began to
 speak, praising God', blessing God.-----

In that 10 months he'd had lots of time to think, and his response shows he had *humbly*
 repented, and *believed God now*.

I wonder if your suffering or disability makes you reflect and do *deeper* into God's
 promises?-----

In **v67**, filled with the Holy Spirit, Zech speaks these God's inspired words of praise
 and prophecy.

See how, like Mary, **he praises God** - *blessed is* the Lord.

Because he has visited, come & shown care for his people Israel.

He's provided *redemption*, and a horn of salvation, that is, a strong Saviour.

The Saviour who is stronger and greater than God's enemies.-----

So the salvation theme in Mary's song is here too.-----

As is the theme of God *keeping* his covenant promises.

His promises to Abraham (v72f) and David, **v69**, which points back to **2 Sam 7, (SLIDE)**
 the King from David's line ruling forever.

Zech also praises God for his **mercy** in **v72 & 78**.-----

So the themes of God's salvation, greatness, mercy and faithfulness are in Mary's and Zechariah's praises.

I wonder how often or how passionately you praise God for those things?-----

But there are clearly **differences** in their songs too.(SLIDE)

Come back to **v48**.

See how Mary praises God that He has looked with favour & grace on her – this young, poor Jewish girl from a country town.---

Mary is the lowly, *humble* servant girl, whom God has done great things for.

And this begins a section and key theme in Mary's song, on the **upside-down world** and priorities.

Kids, I wonder if you've seen the movie **Monsters Inc**?

In that pretend movie the monsters believe scaring children is good, and they scare kids for energy.

Until they discover laughter is more powerful.

They thought scaring kids was good, when it wasn't.-----

Older teens and younger adults, if you've been watching the sci-fi Series, **Stranger Things**,(SLIDE) you'll have heard of the 'Upside Down' – a dark decaying *parallel* dimension mirroring their town.-----

And it's like we're now in the bad upside down in *this life*.

What happens in Luke 2 though, is God turns things upside down, in a good way, for the humble and powerless.

Normally in our world, it's the *rich* and powerful, who come out on top.

They so often get what *they want*, and happily squash others under them.(SLIDE)

Climb on others, to get to the top.

But God will turn things upside down - look at what Mary says.

She's a humble servant whom generations *have called* blessed.-----

And the mighty God has and *will*, **v51**, scatter the proud, topple mighty rulers from their thrones, and send the rich with *full tummies*, away empty.

But God exalts the lowly and satisfies the *hungry*.

Mary describes this in past tense, because he has done this for her.-----

But it's also a principle for how God often relates to and *treats people*.

We'll see this in Luke's Gospel as we go through it next year.

It's what God has done for his people Israel in the past.

Remember Israel was oppressed and trodden-on by Pharaoh, the Philistines, Nebuchadnezzar, the Romans; and God brought them all low.

And now the Messiah King is coming to lift his people up.-----

When people are saved now and on judgement day, God will bring the low high, and the high low.

The proud, powerful n' rich will go down.

And the hungry n' humble before him, will be helped n' provided for.-----

I've spoken with many rich people who say and think, "I don't *need God*, I have everything I need."(SLIDE)

They think, I can pay for what I need, live *how I want*, do what I want.-----

The *rich* are often proud, and want to be under no one, *not even God*.-----

More often it is the poor the lowly the humble, who are humble before God.

The humble recognize they are needy, and *spiritually needy*; they need saving, and ask God to save them.-----

I've met many more Christians in Malawi than in Melbourne.

There's far more poor Christians in the world than rich Christians.-----

I know God saves rich and powerful people too, even you and I.

Mary is not saying every poor and hungry person will get full and wealthy in this life, or the next.

Nor will every rich person miss out on heaven.

But more often it's the humble who are willing to acknowledge that they *need saving*, ask God for mercy, and turn to the Lord Jesus to save them.-----

Mary is saying that God doesn't value what the world values.

Most people, maybe we, have longed for money and wealth, position, power, greatness. Or maybe we've longed for a safe, pain-free pleasure-filled life on this earth, that's still all about ME!-----

But those God will save, lift up, and raise to eternal life, are those who are humble before him.

God saves those who know they are *not the centre* of the universe, the Lord God is.

So I ask, Do you want to make *yourself* big, or make God big?-----

Kids, do you want to be great, or have God be great?-----

God doesn't save those who assert themselves and think they can save themselves, or buy their way, earn their way into heaven.

No. God saves those who are **poor in spirit(SLIDE)** and know we are spiritually *bankrupt* and have nothing to bring to the table.-----

So ask God for mercy, and trust Jesus to save you.-----

Have you *done that?*-----

Have you humbly told God you're sorry for your pride, your selfishness, *greed*, your lack of love, lack of humility and faith?-----

And have you cried out to Jesus to save you?-----

Because he will.-----

And when Christ saves you, he changes you, to grow your humility and generosity.----

Those Christians who *are rich*, like many of us, should be giving to those who are poor.

Is that you?-----

Because, as Zechariah says in **v74-75,(SLIDE)** we've been *rescued to serve God* without fear.

Saved to serve God, please God, all our days.-----

Maybe that's a good new year's *resolution* – that God would help us remember we've been saved to serve him, and that we'd live passionately to *please him* in 2026.-----

The theme of *rescue*, and redemption /freedom from enemies, is also a key difference in Zechariah's prophecy.

In **v71** it's salvation or *rescue* from hateful human enemies.

That's what 1st century Jews longed for.-----

Zechariah then speaks about the future role his son will have.

V76, John the Baptist will be a prophet who prepares people for the Lord *Jesus*.**(SLIDE)**

The knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, John points to it, and Jesus brings it.-----

Zech knows *nothing* of the great salvation facts of Jesus' life, death & resurrection.

But he prophesies about these things to come in the future.-----

They looked forward.

We are privileged to look backward.

Look back at what's recorded about Jesus in Luke's Gospel, with clarity and confidence.---

Being rescued n' redeemed from human enemies, will not ultimately happen until JC returns.

But the Messiah Jesus does come to free his people from their spiritual enemies.

Our spiritual enemies:

The world, the flesh and the devil.

Or Satan, sin and death.-----

Our greatest enemies, are what Jesus came to free us from now.-----

He came to bring **forgiveness**, **v77**.-----

Back in **v68** Zech said God has provided redemption for his people, or *literally* a 'ransoming'.

Remember it was the Lord *Jesus*, who 30 odd years later, would say he gives his life as a ransom for many (**SLIDE-Mk 10.45**).-----

[Kids, please listen in for a moment]

I don't know if you've seen the animated movie **Tangled**.(**SLIDE**)

While Flynn starts out as a selfish man, he falls in love with Rapunzel.

And he is faced with a choice to save his life or Rapunzel's.

After Rapunzel told Mother Gothel that she would go with her if *she could save* Flynn's life, Flynn made the decision to cut Rapunzel's life-saving hair before she got the chance. (**SLIDE**)

Flynn was willing to give up his own life to save her from her mother's manipulation and free her.

More than that, and in *real-life*, Jesus gives his life to set us free.-----(**SLIDE**)

Jesus is the horn of salvation, **v69**, the strong Saviour, who will die to ransom and free people from death n' judgement.-----

He dies so our sin against God can be forgiven.-----

You see our relationship with God is broken, and our *world is* broken, yet it's because *we are broken*.

The world is messed up because *we are* messed up.

The problem isn't just in other people. The problem is in us.-----

Which of us has *never hurt* someone else, with our words or our actions?-----

Which of us has *never* made someone cry? Or taken advantage of someone to get what *we want*?

We rejected God and *We are the* problem.-----

Yet in love and mercy and grace, God comes to us to fix it, and enable forgiveness.-----

This forgiveness, we don't deserve it, we cannot earn it; we cannot trade for or work for it.

We receive it, by humbly asking for it, (**SLIDE – 1 John 1.8-10**) and relying on Jesus.----

And not only do we get forgiveness, but we get light and life.

In **v79**, Zechariah says, God will visit us 'to shine' light and life, on those living in darkness and death.----- (cf. **Mal 4.2**)

It was Jesus who would bring this light and eternal life. (**SLIDE**)

Just like we sing in **Hark the Herald**:

"Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings".-----

Jesus came to bring light to those in darkness,

life to those facing death; which is all of us,

peace to those in fear.

The answer to all our deepest needs, and greatest longings.-----

Have you tasted these things in Jesus?-----

I thank God, that **when my Dad faced his own death** earlier this year, that he could pass away in peace.

He could die in peace, and look forward to light and life with God, because of Jesus.

Jesus crushes sin and death for all who humbly trust him.-----

Praise God for Jesus, our strong Saviour.

Will you praise God for him?-----

Do you, or will you, praise God for his greatness, his merciful forgiveness, him freeing you from death and judgement?

Will you praise God that he saved you, when you didn't deserve it?-----

What can you do to make praise, Wow-God prayers, more a part of your prayer life?----

We have many reasons to praise the Lord.-----

And we should do that every day.

Like we sing, in *O Night Divine* – “Christ is the Lord, O praise his name forever”.-----

Or I hope you can say, **(SLIDE)** ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour’.-----

Let's pray